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THE

NEW YORK PULPIT

IN

THE REVIVAL OF 1858.

THE

NEW YORK PULPIT

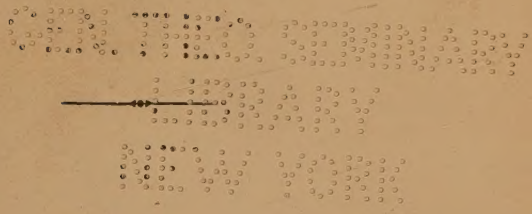
IN

THE REVIVAL OF 1858.

A Memorial Volume

OF

SERMONS.



NEW YORK:
SHELDON, BLAKEMAN & COMPANY.
BOSTON: GOULD & LINCOLN.
LONDON: TRÜBNER & CO

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

The great Revival of 1858 will be memorable in the history of the Church of God. In the features of its commencement and its progress it has been so manifestly marked by the power of the Holy Spirit, that men with one accord are willing to give God the glory of the work.

In the city of New York and in its vicinity it has been in many respects more remarkably developed than in any other part of the country. Here emphatically it has been "Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit." It has been characterized by united, fervent, and importunate prayer. God has appeared for the salvation of sinners, and multitudes have been converted to Christ. The revival has been confined to no part of the city, and to no section of the Church. Christians of various names have cordially united in the work, and God has blessed them all with the out pouring of his Spirit. The measures employed have been the ordinary and appointed means of grace—the preaching of the word, and prayer.

The publishers of this volume, believing that Christians in other parts of the country will be glad to enjoy some of those exhibitions of truth which God has so peculiarly owned and blessed in the great metropolis,

have requested a number of ministers, of different denominations, to furnish one of their ordinary discourses delivered in the midst of the present great Awakening, for the purpose of making a MEMORIAL VOLUME of this work of God. Most of those clergymen to whom application was made, have kindly and cheerfully complied with our request. They have each given us a sermon prepared with no thought of its going beyond the hearing and the hearts of their own congregation. The sermon is in no respect intended to exhibit the learning or the ability of the preacher, but rather to be a specimen of the truth, and the manner in which it has been presented by various eminent clergymen in the ordinary ministrations of the Sabbath. These pages are the earnest, pungent expression of their heart and mind, at a time when God is doing great things in their churches, whereof they are glad. And, although they would not have committed these sermons to the press had they looked merely to the praise of men, they are willing that we should send them forth to be read in public and private, in city and country, in the remotest regions where our language is spoken, as their testimony to the truth, and to its simple power under the Holy Spirit in turning men from the error of their ways to the love and service of God. The limits of this book preclude the use of sermons by many others whose labors have been greatly blessed, and which we still hope to give to the public in a future volume. That the present volume may be widely and permanently useful is the desire of the publishers.

THE NEW YORK PULPIT,

IN THE

REVIVAL OF 1858.

I.

THE HOLY FLOCK.

BY JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D.

Minister of the Nineteenth Street Presbyterian Church.

Thus saith the Lord God: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts.—EZEKIEL, xxxvi. 37, 38.

WHEN Israel in the text is encouraged to inquire of God, we may apply it to ourselves; for if we confine all the more ancient Scriptures to the literal Hebrews, we condemn much apostolic reasoning, and cut ourselves off from precious promises.

The text predicts a great increase. "I will increase them with men like a flock, or with flocks of men: as the holy flock, or the flock of holy ones, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts." At the three great festivals, Jerusalem was crowded both with animals and men. One or both of these may furnish the comparison If the figure points at the multitude of animals gathered

for sacrifice, we may remember the passover at which Hezekiah and the princes gave the congregation seventeen thousand sheep; or the subsequent passover, at which Josiah gave the thirty thousand lambs and kids: if it points at the multitude of worshippers, we may remember their temple psalm, "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." But whether the former or the latter, THE CHURCH IS TO BE ENLARGED WITH AN IMMENSE INCREASE, AND WE ARE TO PRAY FOR IT.

Two things commonly lead to prayer: first, some desirableness in the object; and secondly, some expectation of being heard. Accordingly, the text, under a striking figure, holds forth a desirable object, and excites the confidence that God will entertain our petition. The latter, though a most important truth, is not peculiar to this subject, but common to all the themes of prayer. It is allowable, therefore, to assume your belief that God is the hearer of prayer; that what he has promised he will perform; and that he will be inquired of in order to bless; while we occupy our time chiefly with an attempt to show the desirableness of the blessing promised.

A strange incredulity has occupied the minds of some with regard to REVIVALS OF RELIGION. The term may not be wisely chosen, and the thing itself has doubtless been often counterfeited; but that it is agreeable to the divine will, and analogous to the economy of grace, that great enlargement should be granted to the church, at favored seasons, it is wonderful that any can question; and my humble but earnest endeavor shall this morning be, to hold this particular blessing so long in the rays of light beaming from Scripture and history, as shall be necessary to make every candid hearer perceive its glow and radiance; so that some at least may cry out with desire, saying, for the sake of our city, our beloved

land, and our bursting population—"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years!"

We must carefully separate the Revival of Religion from its adjuncts and accessories; we must distinguish it from false and dangerous excitements, which have usurped its name; but understanding by the phrase such an influence of Divine Grace as issues in the simultaneous conversion to God of great numbers, we should not only approve it, but long for it.

Such an increase of the church is desirable, because it glorifies God; because it is the very end for which Christ died; because it is the method in which God has raised his church to its most remarkable prosperity; and because it is demanded by the present state of our city and nation.

Our nation! There used to be magic in the word. Our country was the watchword that passed with magnetic swiftness and power through the lines of our forefathers. Has it ceased to charm their sons? Have we sunk into unpatriotic selfishness? Have Christian souls forgotten—*can* they forget—what it is that blesses a country—that righteousness exalteth a nation—that the Gospel only can redeem us from violence, vice, and damning falsehood? If not, we shall, as Americans, no less than as Christians, seek for a vast increase of success in the conversion of multitudes.

I. It is by just such extension of the church that God has chosen to glorify his name.—The world stands for the sake of the church, and the church stands to glorify God; "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things." The conversion of souls is the restoration of rebellious subjects, who thenceforward know God, adore his blessed perfections, do him homage and service, and praise him to all eternity. The ascrip-

tion of honor from all redeemed souls is the same, whether in earth or in heaven: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." If the divine plan is so accomplished by this very event, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, how much more shall the heavenly chorus be swelled over the restoration of hundreds and thousands! As every Christian feels that his own holiness is valuable, chiefly because it is a tribute to the declarative glory of the Lord Almighty; so for the same reason he desires the holiness of all his fellow-men. This, then, is the capital reason which should prompt us to seek a revival of religion, namely, that it is the very means which God has chosen to glorify his name.

II. IT IS THE VERY END FOR WHICH CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION.—This ingathering of souls is the covenant recompense of our adorable Redeemer. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, *he shall see his seed*, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." Such is the representation of prophecy, and our Lord's own words declare the same truth. A few days before the final passion, when certain Greeks desired to see him, he uttered, as he sat in the temple, an awful proclamation of his certain and imminent death, and at the same time (plainly struggling with a conflict which anticipated that of Gethsemane) he cried, "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME!" That instant came there a voice from heaven, saying, "I have glorified it and

will glorify it again." The people, therefore, that stood by said it thundered; others said, "an angel spake to him." But Jesus took this occasion to declare his approaching death; adding, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Remarkable words; into the exposition of which we find no time to enter now, but which might furnish profound meditation for the reflecting mind; as they show beyond contradiction that the conversion and restoration of a multitude of souls is, in the mind of Christ, coupled with the most tender agonies of his atoning work. His solace, as it were, over the cup of anguish, is the vision of many sons and daughters brought to glory. The extension of the church, therefore, by the addition of great numbers of converts, is desirable, as being the very end for which Christ accomplished the work of redemption.

III. IT IS BY A RAPID INGATHERING OF MANY SOULS THAT GOD HAS HERETOFORE CONDESCENDED TO ELEVATE HIS CHURCH TO ITS HIGHEST PROSPERITY.—This has been repeatedly the case, as is proved by the most familiar ecclesiastical history. We need not dwell a moment on the great and simultaneous conversion of multitudes on the day of Pentecost; but we may well give attention to the fact, that from that time forward, until Christianity had reached its utmost limits, there was a succession of similar awakenings. In other words, the increase of the church during the first two centuries was by the rapid accession of great numbers, rather than by the gradual adding of a few at a time, after long intervals. That this is true, should seem undeniable, when we take the testimony of authentic records as to the great extension of the church within a comparatively short period. By no other mode of increase was it possible for a diffu-

sion of the truth, so speedy and so wide, to have been accomplished. It has been stated by accurate reckoners, well versed in ecclesiastical story, that there has never been so mighty or triumphant an onset upon the powers of darkness, as in the primitive age, and that the church has never gained so much upon the world as it did before the death of the last apostle. Ancient writers speak of the increase of Christ's kingdom as a matter of amazement. TERTULLIAN, for example, writing about the beginning of the third century in vindication of the new religion, says to the Roman authorities: "Though we are strangers of no long standing, yet we have filled all places of your dominions—cities—islands—corporations—councils—armies—tribes—the senate—the palace—the courts of judicature. If the Christians had a mind to revenge themselves, their numbers are abundant, for they have a party, not in this or that province only, but in all quarters of the world. Nay if they were to combine and forsake the Roman empire, how vast would be the loss! The world would be amazed at the solitude which would ensue." Upon this quotation I remark, that such an extension of Christianity presupposes a progress of the work of conversion immensely more rapid than what we observe in this city. The very persecutions prove this; there must have been a great amount of fuel to support such fires. Even in regions of Africa, which are now a desolation, there were cities and provinces of Christians. The writer just cited, in an appeal to the persecuting governor of Africa, says: "If you persevere in your persecution, what will you do with these many thousands, both men and women, of every rank and every age, who will promptly offer themselves? Carthage itself must be decimated." And again, enumerating the nations who have believed in Christ, he declares that the Gospel has penetrated to regions which

were inaccessible even to the eagles of imperial Rome, and that the church had already spread itself more widely than the four great monarchies. "Excellent governors," says Tertullian, "you may torment, afflict and vex us; your wickedness puts our meekness to the test; but your cruelty is of no avail. It is but a stronger invitation to bring others to our persuasion. The more we are mowed down, the more we spring up again. THE BLOOD OF THE CHRISTIANS IS SEED." *

These facts have often been used, with good reason, as evidences of the divine origin of our religion; but they are equally strong proofs that the increase of the church in that day was by great effusion, sudden reformation, and something like simultaneous ingathering of multitudes. And when this mode of increase was exchanged for that slow and stealthy progress to which we are familiarized, it is to be observed that the great conquests of religion were brought to a stand, and the Christian host stopped at limits which succeeding ages of effort have scarcely been able to push forward.

Let us not, however, conceal the truth, that similar effusions of grace, in many succeeding centuries, have had analogous, if not equal effects. It should seem, that whenever God looks down in special mercy on his church, the rays of his countenance produce a vernal increase, and when the people are willing in the day of his power, converts are like the dew drops of the morning. It was so, from time to time, in the different countries to which the gospel won its way. It was eminently so in the thirteenth century, when the evangelical servants of God increased so mightily that in Bohemia alone there were, in 1315, reckoned no less than eighty thousand of these witnesses for the truth.

* *Semen est sanguis Christianorum.* The version is abridged.

It was so in the fourteenth century, when JOHN WICLIF, the "morning star of the Reformation," heralded the dayspring in the land of our forefathers. It was so in the fifteenth century, under the labors of JOHN HUSS and JEROME OF PRAGUE; and most signally was it so in the great revolution by means of LUTHER, ZWINGLE, and CALVIN.

Let us ask your attention to the neglected truth, that WHAT WE CALL THE REFORMATION WAS A GREAT REVIVAL OF RELIGION. It is a deplorable error to consider this moral convulsion as a mere change of speculative tenets, or a mere struggle for liberty of conscience. Both these it did involve, undoubtedly; but beneath these, vivifying and nerving these, was the sense of spiritual things, the experience of conviction, conversion, holy awe and holy joy, the gracious affections of the new creature, which pervaded countries and traversed a whole continent. It was the personal interest of souls in agony about escape from the wrath to come, which gave interest to the great questions between Popery and Reform. The sudden unveiling of the long hidden Bible before the laity, was like the return of the sun upon a Greenland night. The entrance of the ray gave understanding to the simple; and in thousand of instances, the rejection of Pelagian error and the acceptance of Christ were contemporaneous and undistinguishable exercises. Never, certainly, since the days of the early Christians, was there so wide-spread a concern about religion; never were there so many conversions. The published correspondence of the Reformers, and particularly of MARTIN LUTHER and JOHN CALVIN, shows that a large part of their time was employed in giving counsel and consolation to inquiring, convinced, and tempted individuals; and of their published works, considerable portions are wholly employed in discussing those very

points which have paramount interest in a season of general awakening. The good and great men who were the chief instruments in this amazing revival felt and avowed that it was entirely of God—that all true faith was of his immediate operation—and that nothing but the omnipotence of the Spirit could produce the change which they observed and experienced. Their uniform language on this point was a reiteration of the truth, "JESUS"—"having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." And there is reason to believe that the benign work did not abate in its power so long as a full tribute of praise was given to the sovereignty, and mere grace of God, in applying, as well as providing, the way of salvation. Persecution availed as little as it had done ten or twelve centuries before. Even Catholics perceived this. "We are sufficiently taught," says THUANUS, in his famous dedication to Henry the Great, of France, "we are sufficiently taught by experience that sword, fire, banishment, can not in the least be effectual against the Reformed Religion, but tend more to put it forward. In this very kingdom, we see, the more they are pursued, the more their number and authority increase, and rather seem to lose ground when they have most outward peace." So rapid was this progress that in less than forty years, in the face of the united opposition of the Church and the Empire, against all proscription, and in spite of rack and fagot, the principles of evangelical religion had overspread Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, and the British isles. It was an outpouring of the Spirit, under which the mountains flowed down at His presence, with a converting power which was acknowledged by tribes and nations. How idle is it, then, to dream that the accession of great multitudes at once is not agreeable to God's way of dealing with his church!

The remarkable condition of religious things, among our Puritan and Scottish ancestors, was the simple consequence of this Reformation Revival, prosperously carried out and made permanent. The work of grace was upon the hearts of multitudes. Never since apostolical days has religion more widely pervaded a whole community. Men of the world may sneer at the narrowness, or the preciseness, or the apparent sanctimony of the better sort of Puritans, and of the Reformed in Scotland; but, sneer as they may, they are forced to acknowledge that these men had virtue, good order, courage, and success. The final cause of this, so far as we of this country are concerned, is very obvious. Had British America been colonized immediately on the discovery of the continent, New York, or whatsoever great emporium occupied this our island, would probably have been popish at the present hour. But North America was planted by Protestants, and largely by a race of men whose whole activity owned evangelical religion as its animating principle. They came out from amidst great awakenings; and, after the first plantations, every arrival from the old country brought them news of the revivals which took place under the Bunyans and Baxters of England.

As it regards Scotland, we may judge of the foundation by the structure. Religion made its conquests with a kind of triumphal progress. I will not justify all that was done; but I will say, and challenge contradiction, that the worst offences of the Scottish Reformers may well be forgotten when placed in comparison with the violence, and perfidy, and relentless atrocity of their enemies, and that if true religion of the heart ever existed among men, it existed among the Scottish men of the first and second Reformation period. The subjugation of a whole people within a brief period to the principles

of the gospel, is proof that the church was increased with rapidity, and by large accessions; in other words, that there was a revival of religion, even in the modern sense; and such augmentation there was in often-renewed visitations. Again and again the inquiring church was increased with men like a flock.

To omit a multitude of instances, what Scotsman is there, or what descendant of Scotsmen, who does not recur in thought to the wonderful outpouring of the Spirit in the parish of Shots? It was on that occasion, during the preaching of JOHN LIVINGSTON, ancestor of the late venerable divine of the same name, under a sermon from verses preceding my text (vv. 25, 26), that several hundred persons are supposed to have been brought under saving convictions of sin. Though the greatest, it was not the sole instance; nay, there were hundreds of the same kind, but less in degree.

Again, more than a century later, in 1742, at Cambuslang, near Glasgow, among the same people, our ecclesiastical ancestors—and under the same doctrines for which we, like themselves, are daily called in question, there was a revival of religion in which there were three hundred conversions in one small parish. This extended to neighboring parishes, precisely as we have witnessed in our own day, when the like blessed influences have been enjoyed among ourselves.

Time would fail me if I were to open the interesting history of the success of the gospel in Germany, under the labors of SPENER, FRANCKE, and the Pietists of Halle, as they were called. It is sufficient for our purpose to say, that the great and rapid spread of religion which accompanied their exertions, affords only another proof of the pleasure which God has taken in communicating his grace copiously, and speedily. But I cannot pass from these examples without saying that our own coun

try has been the scene of just such blessed events. It is now more than a hundred years since the whole Northern and Middle States began to shaken by the voice of God, as communicated by such instruments as WHITEFIELD and the TENNENTS. From that time onwards there was a series of revivals, which have given a character to our population which no opposing influences have as yet availed to erase. After the men just named, there were none more remarkable in carrying forward this blessed work, than the first five Presidents of Princeton College: Jonathan Dickinson, Aaron Burr, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davies, and Samuel Finley. Indeed, so long as heart-religion continues to be cherished, the extant works of two of these will be resorted to as incomparable treasuries. The histories of that day tell us of revivals in all the region around us—scarcely a town which is not named as the theatre of such transactions. And I must be allowed, in passing, to mention as an instance of the interest then prevailing as to the things of God, that in the spring of 1740, one hundred and eighteen years ago, Mr. Whitefield's journal contains an entry respecting Nottingham, a place not far from us, and well known to us. "It surprised me," he writes, "to see such a great multitude gathered together at so short a warning, and in such a desert place. *I believe there were near twelve thousand hearers.*" The change wrought throughout New England and portions of the Middle States, was indescribable. I have counted the signatures of more than a hundred pastors. "We look upon ourselves and all the ministers and people of God throughout the land, [as] laid under infinite obligations forever to admire and adore such free and sovereign grace, so amazingly displayed in visiting a professing people, in a day of such general security, indolence, and formality; causing so great an awakening of all sorts

of persons, and bringing such numbers of different ages hopefully to close with Jesus on the self-denying terms of the gospel, so as that it hath far exceeded any hopes and expectations of ours, as well as anything of this nature we ever saw in our day." *

Here we close the historical summary, being willing to confine our observations to the revivals of former days, of which the instruments and the subjects have long since gone to their account, and of which we can judge with more impartiality, now that the fruits of them have been so long laid up in the garner of the Lord. Enough has been said to justify the statement that it is by revivals of religion that God has seen fit to elevate his church to its seasons of highest prosperity. That he has been pleased to do so in our country, in former days, is to be reckoned among his greatest favors to our nation. For no man can tell how far astray we might by this time have gone, as a people, but for such interpositions of grace; and none can calculate how much the elevated tone of moral and religious feeling which still exists among us, is due to the impressions thus made upon us in our forming state; especially as the generation which was then in childhood and youth, was the very one which was in maturity when our Fathers remodelled our polity at the Revolution. By which I am naturally led to observe, in the fourth place, that

IV. It is just such an extension of the church which is demanded by the actual state of our nation. Of all Christian nations, America is that which most needs genuine revivals of religion. It is because the Lord had a favor unto us that his "right hand, and his

* Gillies's Collections, vol. ii., pp. 314, 315.

arm, and the light of his countenance" have granted to us more such seasons than to any other people. It was the bold conjecture of Edwards, that the latter-day glory is to begin in America. "God has already put that honor upon the other continent, that Christ was born there literally, and there made the purchase of redemption; so, as Providence observes a kind of equal distribution of things, it is not unlikely that the great spiritual birth of Christ, and the most glorious application of redemption, is to begin in this." Even admitting this to be a pleasing dream, our country, from the very necessity of the case, is to be the theatre of unprecedented revolutions. Our population, our extent, our government, our common language, and our religious freedom, mark us out for great things—but whether good or evil—God knoweth. It is the belief of the sagacious, that unless our religious growth keep pace with our national increase, we shall grow up to sectional feud, factious division, disaster, and desolation; that no tardy, languid, scarcely perceptible increase of religion will meet the exigency; and that nothing can do so but great accession to our churches, produced by such revivals of religion as we hope and pray may be granted throughout the length and breadth of our land. That which characterizes us is the centrifugal tendency of our people, and the high rate of their increase. Even if this were not the case, if by some extraordinary check on population, we should stand where we are, and not add another unit to our census, we should still need a large measure of salt to keep us from ruin. We have not been faithful to the deposit with which we are intrusted. From the absurd attempt to keep up religion without doctrine, a large part of the present generation has grown up already, with no proper safeguard against soul-destroying error. Not only have they no tests to distinguish Pelagian-

ism from Gospel grace, but they even learn to treat with indifference the heresies which deny the atonement and the godhead of Jesus. That charity which believeth all things but God's truth, opens the doors to a fatal religious literature; in which, by a sort of universal solvent, all the doctrinal bones of theology are reduced to a gelatinous mass of ambiguous sentiment. The consequence is easily predicted. In stupid dread of the catechism, and the definitions of the church, these people and their children lose all sense of the diversities of creeds, become looser and more ignorant as falsehood grows familiar, and are led off to universalism on one side, and popery on the other; or, more degrading and ruinous still, to Socinus, Swedenborg, familiar spirits, or the Mormons. We have not been laborious and careful for the perpetuity of the truth. We have multitudes among us who are losing every impression of their infancy, becoming latitudinarian in their creed, relaxed in their morals, and tending towards the world from whom their fathers came out. We have a mixed multitude without the camp, accompanying our march, who ever and anon fall a lusting after some error or some wickedness. Time was, when the population of many regions of America was almost entirely religious; it is not so now. Thousands there are, even of those who regularly attend public worship, who have no theology, no family prayer, no catechizing, who care for no differences of doctrine, and whose children grow up even more ignorant than themselves. By unavoidable mixtures and alliances, the parents have learned a new dialect, and "the children speak half in the speech of Ashdod." The nature of genuine piety is less weighed, less understood. The agency of the Holy Spirit has been cast into the shade; new and dangerous views of regeneration have become common; while the tendency

has been away from dependence on God, and towards a religion of human fabrication. Even the traditionary reverence of our people for revivals has been played upon by the adversary, and we have had the name, without the reality, and have been called upon to wink hard at error, lest we should fight against the God of truth. Thus, when the king of Egypt took away from the temple the shields of gold which Solomon had made, King Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields. The name was as before. At the same time that we were doing away with the true glory of revivals, even the sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit in changing the depraved nature, we were in some places laying mighty stress upon certain external means and measures, which are questionable at best, but which, when erected into sacraments, are like the brazen serpent Nehushtan which Hezekiah destroyed, when the children of Israel burned incense to it. So that even if our population were not to increase, we should need the reviving influences of God.

But the supposition is violent and absurd. We do increase by thousands and tens of thousands. Within the old thirteen States we grow by myriads—and what shall I say of the States and territories which rise like an exhalation? Add to this the emigration from abroad still pouring in on us; and then, while all awake with this vision of the future, ask yourselves, Must these millions be left without the gospel? or can the gospel reach them, with our present means? Will not this amazing increase of our people immeasurably outstrip the column of religious influences? At our present rate of march, can we even keep in sight of the army of aliens whom we would subdue to Christ? My brethren, the subject is one of incalculable greatness. Unless the means of grace can be made in some degree to keep pace with the growth of

our population, our rising States must be abandoned to error, infidelity, and disorder; and that great West, which is ere long to turn upon us with an influence far beyond that which we now exert on them, must, without the gospel, send back on us the shocks of a practical atheism.

Now we have no means which, in the way we commonly apply them, can reach this case; and nothing can throw one ray of hope upon this scene, until the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high. If, instead of tens or twenties added to our church in a year, God should turn us and cause his face to shine, and increase us with men like a flock, giving us hundreds on hundreds, as he can easily do, we shall have ministers enough, and holy men enough, to carry on the warfare to conquest.

There are some great facilities for the rapid communication of religious influence and sympathies, which were unknown to our fathers. The commerce of mind with mind throughout the whole tract of our country is striking. The telegraphic rapidity of intelligence and feeling is electric, and characterizes the age. Now the mechanism is ready—the communication is instituted—the train of conductors is laid; and oh! my brethren, shall not God be inquired of by us to give the divine, omnipotent touch? Shall we not beseech him to stir up his strength and come and save us? Shall we not fall before him and entreat that he would forgive our land, and signalize our age by unexampled influences of reviving grace?

He has done wonders—what do I say! From the Pacific islands, within our own memory brooded over by a night of horrid superstition, we once heard sounds scarcely ever heard before since apostolic days; and God has chosen American evangelists to be the messen-

gers of peace to these Sandwich Isles. I own I am struck with amazement and awe, when I read in the letters of men who went out from ourselves, that seven thousand, within one year, professed faith in Christ. When I behold, in imagination, stated assemblies of two, three, and four thousand, each from those who had been the vilest idolaters, I can only say, Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? What encouragement need we ask for our prayers? Let us not be faithless but believing. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Let us not imitate the folly of the Syrians who said, "The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys." He is not the God of the distant islands merely, but is ready to hear our prayer, and able to accomplish for us such an increase as the world has not yet seen.

We seem strangely bent upon measuring all God's future achievements by those which are past, and limiting what he can do to what he hath done, although the whole of prophecy is vocal with the song of wonders yet in reserve. Prophecy must needs be fulfilled, though heaven and earth pass away: but prophecy cannot be fulfilled without a wide-spread conquest of the earth, and a rapid conversion of mankind, such as we have not seen.

Imagine a shower of grace in this single church—every house filled with worshippers—every place of business made solemn or joyful by the presence of religious emotion. Think of a season during which religion should be the great matter of interest with every young person. Think of the effect on ministers—on professing Christians—on sinners. Imagine, if you can, my brethren, a universal shower over the whole country! God is able to give more than we are able to ask. His power

need not stop at millions. He will be inquired of. He will be prayed unto.

The body of my remarks has been spent in showing the desirableness of such an extension of the church. It is less necessary to expatiate upon the means of gaining this transcendent blessing, as there is only one named in the text, prayer; that one will never be employed while we undervalue the blessing, and never neglected if we value it. But it may not be unnecessary to drop a caution for a certain class of minds which shrinks from this absolute resort to God, and considers prayer as a mere appendage and auxiliary to human exertion. Let us observe that it is GOD who will increase Israel. And He will be inquired of to do it for them. The appropriateness of this statement is obvious.

All prayer is an acknowledgment of dependence. It is the resort of weakness to Omnipotence. As such it gives glory to the Divine agency, from which corrupt, proud human nature is always prone to derogate somewhat, especially in the work of saving souls. But by *grace* are we saved, and God will have the excellency of the power to be—yea, to appear to be—of Himself. All our difficulties in believing in the possibility of an unexampled increase of the church arise from our looking at human agency instead of divine efficiency. Perhaps one reason why God has so often arrested His bountiful hand, and left us to barrenness, is, that we have arrogated to ourselves much of the power. We have substituted man's work. We have taken regeneration out of God's hands into our own. We have made us new hearts, after the image of ourselves. We have in the place of the new creature substituted a mere purpose, a volition to serve God, to choose him to make us happy—a purpose which may be, and often has been, altered the next hour. And we have thus exchanged the glory of

God for our own glory, and left the Lord Jesus Christ and his merciful atonement entirely out of our system.

My brethren, what visions arise before the eye of faith in the expectation of such a return to us! On omnipotence we cannot count too much. God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Such a dawn of glory as this upon our churches would extend its beams to our remotest Missions. Religion would be to our national Union a cement worth more than all political ties and compromises. The young men of our age would grow up under new influences, a generation fitted for a new work, in a better age. It is no more than is predicted. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Our youth would be the happiest youth, and we the happiest people in the world. Oh that I could impress, and be possessed myself, with a due sense of the loveliness, the glory, the indispensableness of such a gift. If I judge aright, all other pursuits are nothing to the pursuit of this. Our common and popular methods of doing good to men, aim only at temporal good, or if higher, only indirectly; but this is aiming at the good of the soul, and for eternity. Here is the great work of philanthropy—the only work worth living for.

Dear brethren, you do not need so much to have this demonstrated as to have it pondered. You are not

infidels. You believe in the soul—in its immortality—its preciousness—its peril; you believe that most around you are unsanctified—are perishing; you believe that they must be renewed, or lost—and that the time is short; you believe that they cannot save themselves, that they will not come to the Saviour; you believe that God alone can save them—that he can do it speedily—that he can do it now—that he will be inquired of to do it for you.

Then what room is there for further argument? Your minds concede all that can be demanded. It only remains that you *pray*. God hath promised, and will perform—these solemn feasts shall be crowded—He will increase them with men like a flock, as when ten thousand went up to Jerusalem to sacred festivals, filling every avenue, and overspreading the holy place, the city, and the surrounding hills, and vales, and villages. Let but the blast of the silver trumpet be once heard, long and loud, and sweetly penetrating, over mountain and plain of our beloved land, and the sound of jubilee shall reverberate from distant shores, and the "ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

As the conversion of a multitude, even "flocks of men," sets forth the glory of God, so this is more specially and eminently done, when the blessing comes in answer to prayer. Never have the honors of our common Christianity been so illustrious as when with one consent the people of God have been seen thronging to the place of prayer, as if in public acknowledgment that the excellency of the power is "of God and not of us." The church has long marked in her calendar the connection of Prayer and Pentecost. And amidst many sins and deficiencies in our actual condition in New York, it is cause of adoring thankfulness that so many

thousands have been drawn to put honor upon united and public supplications.

The friend who has already helped us largely is the friend who expects our confidence and our requests. Our divine Benefactor, who hath all fullness, claims that past gifts be remembered, and calls on us to rehearse "the years of the right-hand of the Most High." Are we afraid that he cannot or will not do so great things? The admonition is tender and appropriate: "Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;" and immediately afterwards: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Psalm lxxxi. 7–10. In that awful interview with the patriarch, which almost saved the cities of the plain, Abraham successively received every favor that he asked. But "the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham," and Sodom was given over to vengeance. Let us remember that we pray for nothing less than Christ's great glory, and that it is possible to ask too little. Learn this from the visit of King Joash to the dying prophet. Though he was in earnest, though he wept over Elisha, though he deprecated the invasion by Syria, though he smote with the arrow, which was symbolically the "arrow of the Lord's deliverance," yet he stopped short of the desires and hopes which he ought to have entertained. "Take the arrows," said Elisha. "And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." We have prayed, and have received; but, oh, my fellow-worshippers, have we prayed or received in any measure cor-

responding to the exceeding great and precious promises of Him with whom we have to do? the merits and sufferings of Him whose death and righteousness are our plea? or the boundless compassion of Him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not? We are not straitened in God; but we are straitened in our desires, our purposes, our believings. Here all is narrow; there—in the heart of God—all is wide. We have not, because we ask not. If the waste cities are to "be filled with flocks of men," God will anticipate this fullness of gift by an effusion of the Spirit, causing warm wishes and fervent prayers. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock." When united prayer begins, revival is not merely coming—it has come. And this agrees with the word of the Lord: "And it shall come to pass, before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." In sovereignty of dispensation the Most High prepares his own sheep, causes them to hear the shepherd's voice and brings them into his fold. When the spirit of prayer is universal, the divine gift will transcend all previous example.

Inquiring for God, in the way of renewed prayer, marks growth in the individual Christian. The solitary chamber and the night watches attest the increase of zeal and importunity. Parents, guardians, husbands, wives, teachers, friends, lie prostrate before God, yearning for the conversion of sinners. Above all, ministers of the Word and elders of the churches are made to recognize their solemn relation to the work, and give themselves to prayer. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the case of Shots, already mentioned. "In that place," says Mr. Livingston, "I used to find more liberty in preaching than elsewhere; yea, the only day in all my

life wherein I found most of the presence of God in preaching, was on a Monday, after the communion, preaching in the church-yard of Shots, June 21, 1630. The night before I had been with some Christians, *who spent the night in prayer and conference.* When I was alone in the fields, about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, before we were to go to sermon, there came such a misgiving spirit upon me, considering my unworthiness and weakness, and the expectation of the people, that I was consulting with myself, to have stolen away somewhere, and declined that day's preaching, but that I thought I durst not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon, and got good assistance about an hour and a half; when the points which I had meditated on, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. And, in the end, offering to close with some words of exhortation, I was led on about an hour's time, in a strain of exhortation and warning, with such liberty and melting of heart, as I never had the like in public in all my lifetime." Nor should we fail to notice the modesty of the man, who, in this piece of autobiography, drops no syllable concerning the conversion of a single soul by his means. Yet we learn from the best authority that no less than five hundred persons were, as was believed, converted under that sermon, in that rural churchyard.* Ministers of the gospel, beyond all others, have a serious responsibility at such times,

* The excellent John Brown, of Haddington, thus writes: "Meanwhile, faithful ministers were remarkably countenanced of God at their sacramental and other occasions. Multitudes crowded to their communions, and being eager to hear as much of the gospel as they could, when they had an opportunity of it, they began to hear one sermon upon Saturday before, and another on the Monday after. Mr. John Livingston, a probationer, after having run so far off that morning, preached a sermon at the kirk of Shots, on Monday, June 21, at which five hundred were converted to Christ."—*History of Church of Scotland*, p. 98.

and have cause to ask the intercession of God's people, that they may, with more devotion of the whole man, give themselves to the word of God and prayer. But the plain and incumbent means, and that on which the great blessing thus depends, is direct prayer to Almighty God for the particular gift of large increase. What the Master has already done is an earnest, not a measure, of what he will do. Have many hundreds been brought to Christ amidst the solemnities of decorous assemblies? We ask more than this at the hands of our covenant-keeping God, and of that Saviour who had compassion on the multitudes. We ask that the river of grace, which now trickles along our highways, may swell to an inundation, breaking with peaceful force into dens and hovels, the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty; that salvation may run down our streets; "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over;" that the tidings of his love, and the baptism of his Spirit, may reach, not merely the church-going and instructed child of the covenant, but the open sinner, the publican, and the harlot. "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom!" Amen.

II.

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

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Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.—MALACHI iii. 16.

ON entering a senate chamber, there is something peculiarly impressive in the spectacle of a body of men, whose words are all recorded by others, and sent forth to be communicated to millions, in every part of the land. Thoughts that have sprung from the fine network of the brain, and sent forth into the air by the power of speech, are caught by others, and reproduced upon the network of telegraphic wires, that carry them with lightning speed to the consciousness of an entire nation. Only words, or vibrations, float in the air, and yet they create laws, bear upon institutions, produce peace or agitation, contribute greatly to a destiny.

If the language of our text is true, the whole earth is a senate chamber. The galleries of the invisible world are lined with reporters. Books of remembrance are written, are stereotyped, perhaps better, electrotyped. Among the listeners, there is one august auditor, who hearkens and hears, particularly, every word that is spoken of himself, his character, attributes, government and deeds. In this senate, grave questions are discussed and settled. The fate of more than institutions is decided.

The interests here, though shaped only by a breath, take hold on eternity.

It is the province of the human mind to inspect the habits, structure, anatomy of the races below us; to examine the principles and growth of plants; to survey, indeed, the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. It may be true, that besides the Omniscient Being, the order of intelligence next above the human family may study us, may not only hear our words and witness our deeds, but explore the moral anatomy of each subject, and report upon the progress of every candidate for the honors of heaven. If, as the Apostle intimates, the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, is it not reasonable to suppose that they are acquainted with the objects of their benevolent efforts, and know their wants and circumstances? If the angels encamp round about those who fear God, may they not take part in their conflicts, aid them in their struggles, and participate in their victories.

From the hints given in the Scriptures, we infer that our words are listened to by a vast invisible audience, that we act upon the stage of life under the direct inspection of a great cloud of witnesses, and that there are means of communication between us and the ranks of intelligences above, more complete and extensive than any systems that have been established between the nations of the earth. We are all preachers, and address auditors so numerous that they cannot be numbered. We are all writers of books, living epistles that will be read by millions long after we have passed from the stage of life. Each person writes his autobiography, and a copy of each Christian is deposited in the libraries of Heaven. No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. Living or dying, he is the centre of influences, the waves of which will continue to roll until

they reach the uttermost boundary of social existence. Every word uttered, as well as deed performed, is a living force that moves men, touches the skies, and accelerates or retards the working machinery of the moral universe.

In considering the theme brought before us in our text, *we would speak of the power of religious conversation, and its influence in the family, the church, and over impenitent men.*

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." Men will usually converse upon that which is most prominent in their thoughts. The intense worldly merchant will talk of trade, merchandise and stocks. The artist will discuss statuary and paintings. The scholar will converse upon books and authors. The philosopher will argue upon the merits of different principles of science or theories of philosophy. The devotee of fashion will grow eloquent over the last change in dress, the taste of a neighbor, or some frivolous point of etiquette. The Christian will converse upon his hopes, his God, his heaven. He will delight to speak of his spiritual treasures, of what religion has wrought in his heart, of sweet religious experiences, of prospects that fill his moral horizon with brightness, and flood his soul with joy. The young convert in the freshness of his newly acquired possessions, in the intensity of his first love, desires that all should know of his joys, and share in his happiness. He wishes them to see how completely old things have passed away, and all things become new. He invites them into his palace, which he has received in exchange for a gloomy dungeon. He takes them through its spacious and beautiful halls, shows them his rich jewels, costly gems and pearls, points them to the illuminated pictures of celestial scenery on the walls, and from the upper windows directs

their attention to his Father's kingdom, extending far as the eye can reach, with its distant mountains of salvation, its temples of light, its placid lakes, silver streams, its unfading verdure and immortal bloom. He wishes that everybody had such a palace and such an inheritance.

Some persons talk but little about their religion, because they have but little to talk about. Their time, energies, and attention are so absorbed by other subjects, that although they have professed their faith, they scarcely knew where to find it. It may be hid away in some corner of the mind, or it may be wrapped up in some formula or orthodox napkin. If it is a light in existence, it is probably under some bushel. Might it not be well, in such cases, to have the religion removed from under the rubbish and darkness of the distant chambers of the mind, nearer to the tongue, so that some hope might occasionally have the benefit of expression, and some principle get strength by exercise. Perhaps your religion has been so long an invalid that it cannot bear to be brought to the air and light. It may be necessary, you think, that the nurses should walk very softly, and scarcely speak above a whisper. Perhaps your religion has an intermittent fever, some days worse, some days better, but oftener worse than better. Now, if your soul, that the Almighty would fit up as a palace, or occupy as a temple, is nothing but a hospital, in which you are striving to nurse up some poor skeleton of a hope that the breath of a word or two would blow away, then I pity you.

Some, indeed, in reply to inquiries, may speak of their religion; but the tones of voice, manner and expression of countenance, are, as though the person was speaking of a dear friend who was just gone in the last stages of consumption. Were I called in for advice I would

recommend an application for the balm in Gilead, and for the great physician who is there. Let this fever of worldliness abate, and the consuming influence of care be removed, and the patient be revived by the cordials presented by a Saviour's hand, and be strengthened with spiritual food; and religious thoughts, clothed in the robes of living words, will go forth to edify and bless society. Your religion will have power. It will receive the gift of tongues. It will grow eloquent for truth, for God, for Heaven.

The power of conversation all must readily admit. The extent to which it is a source of happiness, or misery; the various joys and sorrows that are incarnated in words and sent on their mission, can scarcely be described. We all know that conversation is the basis of the social element, the nourisher of friendship, the weaver of the ties that bind together kindred hearts, the instrument of usefulness, and a prominent source of domestic enjoyment. It is the medium of communication between intelligent beings, to a great extent the avenue of the affections, and a means of intellectual stimulus.

In the family, it is the harp which needs always to be kept in tune in order to secure domestic happiness. If the strings are broken, or a wrong chord is touched, the jar is felt upon many sensibilities. Often in the morning the key note is struck which gives a character to the whole day. A single word may decide the state of the domestic atmosphere—show whether there are to be heavy clouds or a bright sunshine during the day, whether the air will be balmy or chilly. In some families the words seem to fall as the dew, or as gentle showers that refresh and beautify the plants that adorn the domestic circle. In others they come more like "hailstones," to say nothing of "coals of fire," and

damage the tender flowers. Sometimes a single member of a family may serve the purpose of a lightning rod, and convey harmless to the earth the electricity from the impending storm.

There is no field where the power of religious conversation is so intensely felt, and where the results are so momentous, as in the family. This is the institution for culture, for development. The family is the school of the race, the university of nations. Here the forces of society are cast. Here institutions, social, civil, and religious, are moulded. This is the grand fountain whence flow mighty streams that bless or curse society. Here words are the seeds of principle, the directors of a life, the arbiters of a destiny. They nourish or crush the affections. They excite or stifle holy ambition. Many of the great lights in the church—reformers, metaphysicians, divines—trace their power, under God, to this source. Here a Doddridge, Edwards, Martyn, Payson, and a host of others, first had their affections directed to the Saviour, first felt the power of virtue and the necessity of high moral principle. The graduates from this university at this hour occupy the seats of moral authority throughout Christendom. They are the leaders of the great philanthropic and Christian enterprises of the day, the defenders of the faith in state and church, the pioneers of civilization, the glory of the present and the hope of the future.

Christian parents, your words daily uttered in the family circle constitute in a great measure the world in which your children live, move, and have their being. They breathe the moral atmosphere which you create. They gaze upon the pictures of virtue and religion which your language paints. They estimate the doctrines of Christianity by your standard. Long after you have passed from the stage of action your words will live,

will increase in vitality and power. They will be transmitted as an inheritance, exert an influence through successive generations, and be felt in distant ages in two worlds, perhaps in three.

In the next place, Religious Conversation is a means of spiritual growth in the church. Its reflex power is among its marked forces. Just to express a principle is to strengthen it in the mind of the speaker. The very effort to defend a right position renders it more impregnable. When arguing upon any question, how often the mere excitement of discussion will start up fresh arguments, and new proofs in the mind. It seems sometimes as if an armed host of spiritual warriors, that had encamped round about us, had rushed to our aid, and placed in our hands new weapons of defence. The Christian gains in spiritual strength in the very efforts to convince or strengthen others. He grows by imparting. His religious world enlarges by the attempt to communicate it to another. While describing the beauties of religion, they become clothed with new beauties. While setting forth the attractions of the doctrines of the gospel, they put on their splendid robes, and rich ornaments, and dazzling crowns. They come forth upon the stage of the speaker's imagination with a grace, beauty, and power that they never before possessed. Let the Christian talk about his Saviour, describe his virtues, tell of his love, and that Saviour, every instant, becomes more precious to the speaker. His love opens as a broad ocean before the mind, fathomless, shoreless; wave after wave rolls over the spirit, and the Christian can only cry, infinite! infinite! Let one converse of his heaven, of his future home, and on every side doors will fly open, and new departments in the realms of glory will be revealed. While speaking of a fountain of pleasure, a thousand will burst up all around him. While describing the New

Jerusalem, floating down from heaven, the whole horizon will be lined with images of celestial cities. While discoursing of the attributes of God, those attributes will open to the speaker's mind with a force, sublimity and majesty, never before conceived. Strive to express the power of God, and your thoughts will grow with the effort. Give examples of his wisdom, and often the evidences will multiply upon you faster than you can express them. Put into language your idea of God's eternity, and the harder you labor to fully express it, the more rapidly will the conceptions outrun your words.

I appeal to experience. Does not the Sabbath School teacher feel the reflex influence of his own teachings? Are not the doctrines of Christianity clearer to his mind from the very effort to express them? Had I my wish, every adult member of a church and society would be in the Sabbath School, either as a teacher, or a member of a mutual class, if for no other purpose, at least to obtain the benefit of expressing truth.

Does not the missionary of the cross experience the reflex influence of his attempts to impart instruction to the heathen? Is he not edified, built up, spiritually blessed, by his noble endeavors to save others? The preacher of the gospel often receives incalculable benefit from his own doctrines. The effort to impress others inspires his own soul. His very duties are his own armor of defence. Sometimes a speaker will be all pathos, earnestness, fire, thought kindling thought, faith creating faith, and he addressing an auditor who is a block of ice. The more the speaker kindles, the more the hearer freezes. Perhaps the man came into the sanctuary in a frozen state; frozen by pride, or prejudice, or error. Perhaps ten thousand summers could not thaw him out. Is that preaching wasted? One man at least is benefited by it.

The law of moral providence is: "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and this applies universally. You go to a man and strive to do him good with Christian words, with earnest counsel and entreaty, and he may turn away coldly from you, he may spurn your instructions. Are the words lost? You derive the benefit from them. You obtain the blessing of giving, if he does not of receiving. We hear, indeed, about casting pearls before swine, but they are pearls still, and you can pick them up and put them into your pocket, if the swine do not want them.

These, however, are the exceptions and not the rule; and this brings me to our next point, namely: *The influence of religious words upon others.* And first, their influence upon other Christians. Here we are not ready to admit the exception to the rule, for a real child of God will always be benefited by the religious conversation of another. There is a principle in his soul that will respond to an affectionate, judicious, earnest Christian appeal; and this may be just what he needs, the kind, sympathizing words of a Christian brother. He may be in despondency; clouds of affliction, or trouble, or doubt, may be hanging over him; he needs one to cheer him, to lead him to the light. Modesty may keep him back; he needs some one to press him into the front ranks. He may be sleeping at his post; he needs a trumpet blast, close to his ear, to wake him.

This is certainly a very easy mode of doing good. It requires no elevated station in society. It costs no money. It costs no time. One hour rescued from those wasted out of the twenty-four, and devoted to this duty, would create influences and forces for good that would live long after the pyramids have crumbled, and the stars faded from the heavens.

Consider the themes of this conversation. They are

such as angels delight to dwell upon; such as the noblest and loftiest intelligences in the universe delight to explore; such as swell the anthems of celestial choirs, and such as are pleasing to the infinite Father. They pertain to the duties of this life. They enter into all our relations to our fellow-men. They touch human happiness at every point. They relate to a dying hour—to the flight of the spirit to far off regions—to the ages of immortality. They pertain to the moral government of God—to the grandeurs of redemption—to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus—to the mission of the Holy Spirit—to regeneration, sanctification, and the preparation of the soul for glory. Can any themes be more profitable, elevating, and thrilling? "Visionary!" says the skeptic. The only realities, we reply. The only subjects worthy of earnest attention of enthusiastic pursuit. Visionary! Then all things are visionary. Life is a phantom—government a mockery—revelation a fable, the present all darkness, and the future all hopelessness! Let the skeptic hug, if he will, his fatal delusion. Let him be silent concerning the goodness of God and the treasures of a Saviour's love. Let him be blind to the prizes hung out in the skies, and deaf to the music that floats from the regions of bliss. The Christian should speak of his inheritance, should delight to talk of his journey heavenward, of his home, of his spiritual treasures.

Consider the power of Religious Conversation over the impenitent. Does it fall within the bounds of possibility that a brief conversation with another may decide the destiny of his soul? Can a cause so apparently trivial, so easily set in motion, produce consequences so momentous, consequences infinite? Will the plan of divine benevolence, in relation to any, fail of its end; will the grand scheme of redemption, involving the

sufferings and death of Jesus, be of no avail; will the anxieties of Heaven, so long felt for the wanderer, be all lost, simply because *this small link* in the chain of means is wanting? Have any already perished, because we have failed to warn them of danger, and invite them to Jesus? Do we daily walk amid such vast responsibilities, every step touching a point where ten thousand telegraphic wires meet, every word we utter engraved upon imperishable monuments, every breath of influence bearing a soul nearer to its God, or swinging it farther from the orbit of hope!

Such are the laws of Providence that we cannot fly from responsibility. We cannot abdicate our thrones of power. We all hold office under the government of Heaven, and to that government every soul is accountable.

One may say, I have many religious thoughts and earnest Christian desires, but do not care to express them. Why should you keep them in a dungeon under lock and key? Why keep them buried up in the dark recesses of the soul. There may be an abundance of gold under the soil, in the crevices of the rocks, and mingled with the sand. Of what service is it lying there. Let it be brought forth and cast into coin, and wrought into articles of utility and forms of beauty. Let your thoughts and desires for the salvation of men be incarnated in living words, and move as forces in society, and you may know by experience the truth of the promise, "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Finally, consider the motives to this duty. There is one specified in the text; and if that is a reality; if you can confide in it, have faith in it, fully realize it, it is enough. It covers the whole ground. It is the condensation of all promises, the source of all rewards.

If the infinite God listens to every word that is spoken for him—if a book of remembrance is written before him for those that fear the Lord and think upon his name, what a stimulus is this for religious conversation! How ought it to stir every soul, to quicken with new life every heart, to unloose every tongue, to call forth the most earnest, impassioned, and eloquent words! What are all human audiences, however vast, intelligent, refined, or powerful, compared with this! What are angelic hosts, the highest created intelligences, as listeners, compared with this!

Convince me that my words in the pulpit and out of the pulpit are acceptable to God, that he listens and will reward, and I care not for human opinions. What is the breath of censure, or the criticisms of the fastidious, if Heaven approves? Does God listen? Does his angel record? That is enough.

Hear the promise that follows the text: "And they shall be mine," saith the Lord of hosts, "in that day when I make up my jewels." They will not only be received to the royal courts of the great King, but will be valued and protected as the most costly treasures in the palace. They will be as the most precious gems in the crown of the infinite Sovereign: their beauty never fading, and their lustre like that of the stars shining forever and ever.

III.

PAST FEELING.

BY REV. THEO. L. CUYLER,

Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church in Market street, N.Y.

Past feeling.—Eph. iv. 19.

A little boy is playing by his mother's side. Naturally he is not unfeeling. He is not insensible to generous sentiments. When a rude act wounds his parent's heart, he is smitten with genuine compunction. When he sees an object of distress, he is touched by it. He may, perhaps, give up his spending-money to relieve a beggar; or weep in sorrow for an unguarded blow given to a schoolmate. His heart has some flesh in it. The little fellow has *tears* in his composition; he knows what it is to feel.

Years roll on. His situation changes; and he changes with it. Watchful parents die, or else he is removed far from them. He falls under evil influences. Wicked companions gather about him—restraint slowly decays like a rotting rope—he breaks loose into sin. The calamity befalls him which befell the traveller from Jerusalem to Jericho. He "falls among thieves" who do worse than rob him of his purse; they rob him of

Note.—My only reason for consenting to the publication of this discourse is found in the simple fact that God has been pleased to bless its plain unadorned truths to the conversion of several souls during the present revival.

decency, of self-respect, of all reverence for the pure, the honest, the lofty, the sacred, the holy. He grows reckless, and launches his depravity out on the open sea—literally spreading sail for perdition. When on shore he drinks hard, but feels no compunction. His oaths are exploded with a gusto, as if he loved to blaspheme. All regard for man, all fear of God wears away from his heart. His soul begins to petrify. The flesh turns to stone. At length he is ripe for anything.

In an evil hour he plans a mutiny on board the ship, and with his own hand strikes down the officer of the deck, and heaves his crimson corpse out into the sea as coolly as he would throw over a dog! Years pass by—dark, desperate years of rapine and of blood. At length his pirate-cruiser is captured, and he is brought on shore in irons. His soul is in irons too. They try him, they condemn him, they sentence him. But through it all he is perfectly unmoved. They drag him to his cell. He spends the last night before his execution in that living tomb—and *sleeps!* He ascends the fatal scaffold, as callous as a rock. No words of tender exhortation and entreaty from the chaplain by his side can melt him for a moment. His face indicates nothing but the sullen, obstinate hardihood of despair. That adamantine heart—that heart once tender, once alive to generous feeling, once soft enough for tears of contrition—that heart is now *past feeling!* It once could feel; nay, it did feel. It feels no longer. Shame crimsons no longer that brazen countenance; the dread of death moves not a muscle of that rigid face; the horrors of hell call forth no last cry for "mercy," as he swings out into his terrible eternity! He dies as he lived; and among the nettles on his shunned and solitary grave we would plant a stone—not of respect, but of warning—and write on it God's solemn sentence, "PAST FEELING."

Now such appalling cases as this I have described are not imaginary. They are extreme cases, I admit. They are about as bad as earth can furnish, or fiends can delight to look upon. We have ourselves seen cases very much like them. The gambler, who sits glued to his roulette-table till the morning sun looks in to reproach him—the burglar, who after years of prison experience still plots his deeds of darkness—the poor outcast child of shame, who vents her vileness on the evening air as she passes us in the streets—the ruffian, who makes merchandise of human sinews and human souls—all these are but melancholy spectacles for men to shudder at, and for pitying angels to weep over. They are the terrific examples of what human depravity can work out when man is simply given up *to himself*. They illustrate fully the callousness of the heart when it has become *past feeling*—feeling for friends, feeling for reputation, feeling for God's word, feeling for life itself or for a dread hereafter.

It was, to such persons—to those whom with a sad significance we style "abandoned" persons—that the apostle referred in the passage before us. He had just been exhorting the Ephesian church to purity of heart and life. As a warning, he points to the profligacy of heathenism about them. He makes a beacon of the godless Gentiles who "walked in the vanity of their mind," whose "understandings were darkened," who were alienated from the life of God. Those men had debauched their own moral sense. Their consciences were made drunk. They had given themselves over to the tyranny of lust to "work all uncleanness with greediness." Until at length they had become so insensible to their guilt, that Paul brands them with the fatal epithet, "*past feeling*."

Now I do earnestly hope that this sense of my text is not, and never will be, applicable to any one in this as

sembly. I trust that on no brow here will ever be affixed a brand to which the guilty wearer shall be indifferent—a brand seen and read of all men, except the man himself. If God shall lengthen out my life among you, may I never behold the harrowing spectacle of any young man in this audience so sunk, so dead to all regard for himself, regard for society, regard for the God of Heaven, that he shall not even feel a glow of shame upon his cheek when he meets the mother who bore him, or the pastor who tried to save him. Never, never come that day when any of you, my beloved young friends, shall have become so *dead* to the claims of God and the voice of conscience, that having grown "past feeling," we must be constrained to abandon you as past all hope!

There is, however, a sense in which the solemn words of my text may apply to some of you. I fear it will yet apply. Perhaps it does already. I refer to that *insensibility to religious truth* which marks those who have often grieved the Holy Spirit. This is a most tremendous calamity. It is all the worse from the fact that its victim is insensible to his own insensibility. He does not feel how fearful it is *not to feel.* There are many here whom I could startle at once by telling them, on good medical authority, that a deadly disease was beginning its stealthy work upon their frames; or if I should tell them that a burglar had designs upon their house and life to-night; or that a treacherous friend would betray the secret to-morrow which shall blast their character. But when I come and tell you plainly that you are in danger of being *lost forever*, you scarcely open your ears to listen. What care you for it? "What's that to me."

My impenitent friend! it has not been *always* so with thee. Open the leaves of your heart's diary. Recall your past. Bring up memory to the witness-box. She

will remind you of a time when your conscience was tender, and sensitive to gospel influence. As the words of warning sounded from a pastor's lips, on some past Sabbath, you listened to them, and listened with solemn awe. The truth fell like the small rain on the tender herb. You were melted. You were subdued. You were struck through with conviction of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It was your own sin that haunted you. The spectre would not

"Down at your bidding!"

You were sore troubled. You wept. With red eyes, and the tear still undried upon your cheek, you left the sanctuary. The trifling of the triflers, as they came out of church to laugh, to gossip, or to criticise, astonished you, and grieved you. Feeling so much yourself, you wondered how they could be so apparently "past feeling." Perhaps you prayed, and for a time went "softly." Your long closed Bible was opened. Some faithful friend was sought for religious counsel. And all that time the infinite Spirit of God was striving with you. Have you ever thought of the magnitude and the wonderful mercy of that phrase, "*striving?*" Just think of it. God striving with a sinner! It bespeaks strait and struggle. It bespeaks the anxiety of God himself to save His own wicked child. It is as if the ineffable Redeemer went down upon His knees before the willful, disobedient one, and *besought* him not to commit the eternal suicide!

So the Divine spirit strove with you. And under those strong pressures of truth, and uprisings of conscience and wooings of the Holy Ghost, you were "almost persuaded" to become a Christian. But alas! how is it with you now? Do you feel to-night as you felt then? Does the word *sin* smite you as then? Does the word

hell strike you through with dread? Does the word *duty* arouse you as then? Does the mention of that blessed word "SAVIOUR" stir the fount of tears within you, as it used to do in those days gone by? Can you weep now as you wept then? Can you pray as you prayed then? Or on the other hand, do you not regard the very appeal I am making now to you, as a merely professional thing that I am employed to make twice every week, and in which you have no personal concern? Have you deliberately made up your mind, that in spite of warnings and entreaties, that through sick chambers and dying beds, and yawning graves, that over the very cross of Jesus, planted in your guilty path, you will press your way onward to the gates of hell?

Then I do not say that you are "*past* feeling." I dare not say that. God only knows your future. But most frankly and solemnly, I declare to you, that there *have been* cases in which men have so steeled themselves against conviction, that they were left, like "Lot's wife," monuments of wrath! I do not know that this is your case; but I fear it. I cannot bear to write this awful epitaph over your soul, dead in its trespasses and sin—"*Past Feeling.*" The very thought is a dagger to my soul. Is that a dreadful moment to you, in which you are compelled to enter the chamber of a sick friend, and break to him the fatal truth, that his physician has given him up as past recovery? You would give your right hand to avoid that duty, but fidelity requires it. And I should be an unfaithful watchman for souls, if I did not proclaim to-night, my fears, that there are some now here, who have grieved away God's Spirit forever, and have already passed

> ——"that mysterious bourne,
> By which our path is crossed,
> Beyond which God himself has sworn,
> That he who goes is lost!"

Occasionally a person is found who will frankly confess his total insensibility to all that is most precious to a saint, to all that is most startling to a sinner. A faithful pastor in a neighboring State, relates an instance so important, as a proof of our position, that I shall introduce it, in spite of certain antiquated prejudices against personal narratives in the pulpit. My Bible is full of personal history; and I am never afraid to introduce an anecdote, or relate an incident which makes a page in the great book of God's providence.

"I once entered a farm-house," said this pastor, "on a chilly November evening, and spent an hour in personal religious conversation with its inmates. The aged father of the family—a most kind and amiable man—followed me to the door, and stopped me on the porch. He took me by the hand, and most deliberately said: 'I thank you for this visit, and hope it will not be the last. As you have just commenced your labors among us, I wish to give you a word of advice, based on my own experience. *Let us old people alone*, and devote your labors to the youth of your flock. Forty years ago, I was greatly anxious about my soul; many were then converted, but I was not one of them. During the ministry of Mr. M——, many more were converted, but I was not one of them. And now for years, I have not *had a single feeling* on the subject! I know that I am a lost sinner; I know that I can only be saved through Jesus Christ; I feel persuaded that when I die, *I am lost!* I believe all you preach, but I feel it no more than if I were a block of marble. I expect to live and die just as I am. So leave us to ourselves, and our sins, and give your strength to the work of saving the young.'

"I remembered that incident, and watched the progress of that man. His seat was rarely vacant in the sanctuary; but he was a true prophet of his own fate. He lived as he predicted; and so he died. We laid him

down at last in his hopeless grave, in the midst of a congregation over whom God had so often opened windows in heaven." He was joined to his idols; God let him alone!

I would fain leave you, my hearers, to withdraw with the tremulous tones of that old man's voice, still ringing in your ears. I would prefer that you should go home to ponder the honest confession and the fate of one who was "past feeling" anything but his own indifference. Yet I cannot dismiss you without a few words of affectionate counsel to those who are not "past feeling"—who feel now—who cannot but feel under the touch of God's Spirit. Yonder anxious faces are the dial-plates of anxious hearts. In this silent, hushed assembly, we seem to overhear the very throb of those hearts, palpitating with the great question—"what shall I do to be saved?"

My friend! bear away with you from this house four solemn practical suggestions drawn from the text before us.

I. You feel now; but *do not be content with mere feeling.* Tears never saved a sinner; hell is vocal with the wails of the weepers. *Faith is better than feeling.* Your Bible does not say—feel and be saved. It says, "Believe and be saved." And faith is not enough without action. "The devils believe." There are no atheists in the dungeons of the damned. But lost spirits do not love God, do not *obey* Him. You must obey as well as believe. Act out your feelings. Obey God in self-denying duty. Crystallize your feeling into faith, and prove your faith by your works. "Faith without works is dead." Faith in Jesus is the invisible *root* of religion concealed within the soul; but deeds of holy duty are the glorious outgrowth with stalwart trunk, and branches broad, and luxuriant masses of foliage

lifted into the airs of heaven. And amid these goodly boughs are found the *fruits* of godliness shining—as quaint Andrew Marvell said of the Bermuda oranges—

"Like golden lamps in a deep green night."

Aim immediately at fruits. Begin to-night to serve God from principle. Go home and set up your altar. Lay hold of work; the harder it is the better. Paul struck the key-note of his whole religious life when in the gush of his first feeling he cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to DO?"

II. My second suggestion is, that what you do, you must *do quickly*, for you cannot long remain as you are. For a few brief days in May, the orchards are white with blossoms. They soon turn to fruit, or else float away useless and wasted upon the idle breeze. It will be so with your present feelings. They must be deepened into decision, or be entirely dissipated by delay. You must advance, or be lost. As the result of your present seriousness, you will either become a true child of God, or else a more hardened and unfeeling child of wrath. Dread (as you would dread death itself) the very idea of relapsing into indifference. Cherish conviction. Take your fears to the mercy-seat, and beseech your compassionate Saviour not to permit your awakened soul ever to become "past feeling."

III. My third suggestion is a brief caution. Do not compare your own feelings with those of other people, or allow yourself to be discouraged because you have not the intense griefs or the lively joys of which they speak. God does not command you to feel like this one or like that. He bids you *repent and believe;* you are to conform to His word and not to your neighbors' varying frames and feelings.

The Holy Spirit deals with no two hearts precisely alike. He opens some hearts by the gentlest touch of love; others He seems to wrench open as with the iron-bar of alarming judgments. Spurgeon happily remarks: "When the lofty palm-tree of Zeilan puts forth its flower, the sheath bursts with a report that shakes the forest; but thousands of other flowers of equal value open in the morning, and the very dew-drops hear no sound; even so many souls do blossom in mercy, and the world hears neither whirlwind nor tempest." Do not question the rightfulness of your own heart-exercises because no one else has had any precisely similar. God will not bear dictation. He is a Sovereign. He will save you just as He chooses. Be thankful that you can be saved at all. See to it that you do not cavil and question and tamper until the Holy Spirit abandon you to become "past feeling."

IV. Finally, let me remind you that in the eternal world no one can be indifferent, no one shall be insensible. Neither in heaven nor in hell can you ever become "past feeling."

The home of the ransomed is a home of rapture. Heaven is alive with emotion. Every heart throbs, every eye kindles, every tongue is praising, every finger strikes a harp-string. Listen with the ear of faith, and you can hear the distant oratorios of the blessed as they swell up in melodies seraphic and celestial! Look yonder with faith's clear eye, and you will see the mighty multitudes before the throne. You will behold the flashing shower of golden crowns flung before the feet of one majestic Being. You will catch one outburst of melody. The burden of the strain will be "unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His blood, be the praise and the dominion forever!" No mortal's name shall be heard of then. Paul shall be lost sight of in

the glory of Paul's Redeemer. Luther will be unseen amid the worship of Luther's Reformer. John Calvin shall sing *None but Christ!* And John Wesley shall shout back *None but Christ!* With one heart and one voice they all roll high the magnificent acclaim: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and power, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever!'

The world of darkness will be a world of feeling too. "There shall be weeping" there. Not tears of penitence, but tears of despair. The worm shall never die. There will be a fire unquenchable in every sinner's heart that will burn like a seven-times heated furnace. The debauchee will be gnawed by his appetite for sensualities that never can be gratified. The poor drunkard will be possessed with a passion for the poison-bowl, but will find not a single drop to slake the undying thirst The covetous spirit will writhe in its own selfishness; and the skeptic will be tormented with the constant sight of a Jehovah whom he once denied, and of a heaven which he closed against himself. "*Ye knew your duty and ye did it not*," will blaze in lurid flame on every wall of that dark prison-house!

Conscience will be fearfully busy then—busy in pointing to the visions of a Saviour offered and a Saviour despised—busy in recalling mercies once contemned, and precious invitations trampled under foot. Dying friend! You may smother conscience here. You may drown serious thought. You may gag your moral sense. But that smothered conscience will rise again. It will arise in the dying hour, startled from slumber by the crash of dissolving humanity. It will awake to new life on that dread morn when the Archangel's trump shall sound. It will be alive with an intensity of torment on that day when the "books are opened;" and it will live amid the agonies of perdition *never again to become* PAST FEELING!

IV.

WHY WILL YE DIE?

BY B. C. CUTLER, D.D.,

Rector of St. Ann's Church, Brooklyn.

Why will ye die?—Ezekiel xviii. 31.

The divine speaker cannot be supposed here to inquire of men, why they will sink into the slumber of the grave; for it is appointed unto men thus to die. The body must return to the earth as it was, and the spirit must return to God who gave it. The death here spoken of is eternal death; called elsewhere the second death. It is the judgment of God upon sin. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." It shall be condemned and driven from the presence of God, and be sent into punishment under his everlasting curse. The very words in which the sentence will be passed by the Judge, have already been transmitted to us. "Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now I would have you remark, at the outset, that this death or punishment was not originally prepared for men; for you or for me; it was prepared for the devil and his angels. This leads to some highly important reflections. God would not say to the devil and his angels, "Why will ye die?" For they cannot now escape that which eternal justice has decreed for them.

But God can with reason inquire of men, of you, my unconverted hearers, "Why will ye die?" Why enter an abode of darkness, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth, where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched; a place not prepared for you; where, of right, you should not be; where the decent transgressor will be horribly shocked by the exhibition of brutal, satanic, and demoniacal blasphemy, hatred, rebellion, and fixed and eternal despair? God may well stop you, as you are rushing madly along the broad road to ruin, and inquire "Why will ye die?" Where is the necessity that *you* should enter into that place of torment? You have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. You have been taught by the gospel of my grace. You have had line upon line, and precept upon precept. You have seen clearly the beauty of holiness, and the profitableness of piety. Why should you involve yourselves in the ruin of apostate spirits? Why go to the grave, and proceed to the eternal world, to taste the bitter cup of "the wine of the wrath of Almighty God?"

This is the simple meaning of the text; and I intend to argue the matter with you this evening. Why, when you were born to so high a destiny, and have so fair an opportunity to enjoy it, you should be willing—for willing you are—to barter all this for a trifle; nay, more, to yield yourselves up to what must certainly come upon you, the chains of eternal death, the irrevocable doom of demons and apostate spirits. Oh, why will you die?

Now, that I may argue the matter more fairly, I begin by showing you what is here meant by dying We know little, if anything, about this matter, but what we learn from the Scriptures. In reflecting upon the pangs of a guilty conscience, or the painful feelings of remorse, we may picture to ourselves something of the

sufferings which a condemned soul will experience; but all this must result in a very feeble apprehension of the wrath to come.

I have often endeavored to discover the reason why the term death was employed in this connection; why punishment, or torment, or everlasting burning, or some other term, not associated in our minds with so common an event as death, was not employed; and the only reason which I could frame was this: that the future suffering of the wicked is to be a mixture of living and dying agony! He is not dead; for he is suffering, and conscious of suffering. He is not living, in our sense of the word; but his fate is sealed—his work is done. Death was the word; for he was to experience something like the death struggle, and that of the severest kind; and that protracted for ever and ever!

> "He is to be banished for his life,
> And yet forbid to die,—
> To linger in eternal pain,
> Yet death for ever fly."

Now, this is a dreadful thought. The vagueness of it does not diminish, it rather increases the force and intensity of the term. "Why will ye die?" Why be for ever dying? Men often beg to be put out of the misery of mere corporeal death. But

> "Oh, what eternal horrors hang
> Around the second death!"

Oh, what a pall does not this throw over the futurity of the sinner! Amidst the dusky shades beneath its folds what anguish do we not discern, and where, in the vast, illimitable creation of God, is the sun which is to rise upon this darkness? Death is the word which God

has chosen, and it must have some peculiar significancy.

When the body dies, it falls to the earth in a state of *helplessness*. No power remains in it to defend itself. No opposition can it offer to any disposition which you make of it. Vacancy is stamped on the countenance of the dead; the eyes are fixed, the mouth unclosed, and the proud and noble structure may be trodden under foot, and will not stir when the heel is lifted up against it. You may imprison it in the deepest and darkest grave, and it will make no resistance; or you may lay it on the funeral pile and consume it to ashes; it is helpless still; it is unresisting; it is perfectly submissive. Before death, the sinner may determine that this or that shall be done with his body; but after death, all such disposition is dependent upon others.

Quietly, then, as the dead are laid in the grave, without one protest; passive as they remain, while becoming the food of worms—so helpless will the impenitent sinner fall into the fiery bed of the second death, and experience all his agonies. His soul will be passive, when thrust into the inner prison, and no resistance will be made, while he is bound with chains that will never rust and never be broken; passive as the dead man now is, when you dress him in his winding-sheet, and prepare him for the grave. The sinner can no more resist, when committed to the flames of the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, than the dead man now resists when committed by living men to the tomb.

As God does not ask demons, why will ye die? so neither will he inquire of sinners, why will ye suffer? For they must suffer; their fate is sealed; the inexorable decree of heaven is being put in execution, and God is no respecter of persons.

But another feature in this gloomy object strikes us as

probably contributing to cause its name to have been thus appropriated. Death is synonymous with destruction. The man dies to-day. One hundred years hence, open his coffin, and you may see that destruction has done its perfect work. Not more than a handful of dust, or a gold ring, may be found.

Now, I mean to take this as I do the other analogy only in part. I mean to say, that in the future punishment of the wicked, there will be an extinction of all happiness; a destitution of all pleasure, comfort, or improvement; a destruction of all social ties; of our relationship to God, as redeemed by Christ; of all present hopes, aspirations, reasonings, excuses, defences, expectations, and self-flatteries. The soul will be ruined, will be undone; and in comparison with an undoomed soul, will be as a dead and mouldering corpse, compared with a youthful and beautiful, living and breathing form, rejoicing upon God's footstool. Utter destruction overtakes the soul; it will be coffined up; it will be buried out of sight of the righteous; it will be insensible to all happiness and joy; its case is fixed; the seal of God is set upon its sepulchre—the great seal of Heaven. It is dead. Angels so account it; as one gone, who will be heard of no more.

We may almost fancy its funeral rites. Among the mourners is God the Father, saying, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Among the mourners is God the Son, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, but ye would not." There, too, is God the Holy Ghost, whose strivings have been so long resisted, and who has been so often grieved away, saying, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my voice;

then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." There are throngs of angels, standing in mute amazement, wondering at the spectacle. There are pious, departed parents, crying with one of old, "My son, my son; would to God I had died for thee." There are departed children, whose hopes of a re-union are now blasted for ever, crying, "Oh my father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?"

Then, as the departed sinner reaches the place of torment, lost souls rise up to meet him, saying, "Art thou become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Is thy pomp brought down to the grave? Is the worm spread under thee, and do the worms cover thee? O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen." Then commences the funeral service on the earth. "Man, that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. O merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee. O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

There is one mourner more. It is the earnest minister. Hear his lament: "I called, but he refused; I exhorted, but was unheeded; I besought him, as though God did beseech him, to be reconciled to God. But he would none of my counsel; he despised all my reproof, and now he is gone for ever. *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.* He is weighed in the balance and found wanting. He promised himself that he would repent the next year, the next week, the next day! But it is all over now. Farewell! Farewell!"

Oh that these reflections might make some salutary impressions on your minds! Oh that your impressions

were as deep as my own; not to say as deep as the subject demands. Then might I entertain the hope that when I lay myself out to put this question to you, my beloved friends, in some of the variety of applications of which it is capable, it might be sent home, and the proper response given from your hearts.

I begin with the most important, though not the most forcible reason for your non-compliance with the call of the gospel. I ask you, "Why will ye die?" Why will you persist in a course of sin, which must end in condemnation, and must draw down the wrath of God forever? I ask you, why? Now, if you are in a calm and controversial frame of mind, you will probably reply: "Because I am not able of myself to change my own heart. I cannot escape eternal death, unless God himself shall begin the work in me. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.'" This is very true, and very good in its place; but it is not the proper ground for you to take. It is found in the Epistle to the Romans; and it has been there for eighteen hundred years. But the Epistle to the Romans is not the only book in the Bible. There are sixty-four other books besides that; and in one of those sixty-four you may find a whole chapter especially devoted by the Holy Spirit to answer this very objection, which chapter the author of the Epistle to the Romans had read, and he knew that he was not writing anything against that. Whatever St. Paul meant to teach in the Epistle to the Romans—and even St. Peter did not appear to comprehend all—we know that the prophet Ezekiel meant to teach that no man was under a necessity to be lost. Everything on that subject is clear and luminous in the prophet; and one careful reading of the chapter from which I have taken my text will remove the whole objection of the necessity of your remaining in sin; either because

you descended from sinful parents, or because you now are conscious of a sinful heart. I am not willing to waste your time in meeting any such objection as this.

I ask again, Why will ye die? If you should return an honest answer, you would say, because you cannot give up the pleasures of sin and the enjoyment of the present world. This answer might be given by a very large proportion of those who attend upon the preaching of the gospel. Out of the church men might frame other reasons. They are infidels, or atheists, and, therefore, all such appeals they easily dispose of, and contemptuously and blasphemously deride; *i. e.*, while in health, while the evil day is far off, while the enemy is at a distance. But I am addressing a different class of persons; men who believe the Bible and the Christian religion; who admit that it reveals a state of eternal misery as the certain doom of the sinner. Such, then, I ask, Why will ye run the fearful risk of encountering an eternal tempest of wrath? If you reply with honesty you will say: "Because we love the present world; it is suited to our taste; it possesses abundant means of enjoyment, and we have the power of purchasing its pleasures." Admitting that pleasure and enjoyment can be found in the things of this world, how long can you possess them? A few years, at most; and then old age, or death, will finish the feast. Let us suppose that you have arrived at old age, or at death's door. How, then, will you look upon your present life? You will, you must then die. This is a feature in the case which you cannot avoid. A time will arrive when your enjoyment must come to an end; and as you are a reasoning and reflecting being, you must reflect and reason about your present life.

You are standing on the brink of eternity. You are shivering on the edge of the great precipice. The

dark ocean is rolling and raging beneath you. You are transfixed to the spot. Reason will have its hour. Reflections will crowd upon the soul before the fatal leap is taken. A lucid interval will be enjoyed. How, then, as you wake up from the dream of sin, will your life of folly and impiety appear? How will days, months, and years melt into each other, and each important period seem to say, "What fruit had ye then in those things of which ye are now ashamed?" If there is a death after that of the body, a second death, if that shall stare thee in the face, will not thy present choice appear as madness? Will it not appear that Satan hath blinded your mind, duped your will, deceived your heart, and led you on, step by step, to eternal ruin? What proportion can the pleasures of time bear to the pleasures of eternity? What compensation can the richest life here afford for the eternal shipwreck of the soul?

We have taken it for granted, that you possess a superabundance of this world's goods, and that you will enjoy them to the end of a long life.

But few of the persons whom I am addressing have a superabundance of this world's goods; few of them fully enjoy that share which they possess; and all, even the most fortunate, are subject to one great drawback, sudden death; subject to an instantaneous disruption from all their present possession. Ah! this is the goad that stings them. This is the thorn which is planted in their pillows. This is the dagger which memory, or reason, or reflection, or the preacher's voice, or the passing funeral plunges into the very life and soul of their joys. The rich voluptuary has parted with his guests; their flatteries and gratulations are ringing in his ears; but with a curling lip, and a cloudy brow, he rises up from the table, to walk to and fro in his mansion, and to muse upon, and murmur at his lot; saying, "all this availeth me

nothing, since death standeth at the door day and night, to carry me out. Yes! before another sun has risen and set, I may be in my grave. The coffin may now be made, in which, a helpless load, I shall be laid by strange hands. The cloth may now be woven, which is to enshroud my pampered body; and my first departure from these doors, may be my last sight of this dwelling-place. "Perhaps the clock is now wound up, which before it needs attention again, will strike the last hour of my probationary time."

I say then, the uncertainty of all possessions here below, the certain exhaustion of happiness in them if long possessed; the utter wreck of life, for all true and valuable purposes, if eternal salvation be not made sure, this, I say, should be sufficient for one endowed with reason, to make him pause before he shall embark his eternal all on this perilous voyage.

And I ask, Why will ye die? Why for this vain world consent to endure eternal death, eternal suffering, eternal despair? What shall it profit you to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? Look at the world again; reflect, ye who have long possessed it, upon its real value; consider how often you have despised it; like Solomon, pronounced it vanity; lamented your fatal attachment to it; felt the galling chain of its servitude; and wished, heartily wished, that you could, with all you possess, purchase that religious peace which passeth all understanding. "If this is done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry? If such are your reflections to-day when in health, and when death seems afar off, what will be your reflections when death standeth at the door, when you have but a few moments to live? What would you not then give for one day of salvation, for a good hope of heaven? Oh, what words could convey the unutterable agony, the heart-bursting anguish

of the dying sinner? Many are the big drops exuded from the brow of the dying man, which proclaim with trumpet-tongue his parting struggle.

I can suppose but one more answer, which will be given to the question of the text, Why will ye die? It is this: "I do not intend to die—for ever. God forbid that I should allow death to come upon me unprepared. I shall, no doubt, live many years. By and by, when the great objects of this life are accomplished, or nearly so, I will turn my attention to my soul."

This reply might be put in many forms by old and young, by men in high station and in humble. It is, however, the same in all. This, say they, is not the time for conversion, for piety, for religion. Yet it certainly is the time in which God puts the question of the text. The Lord is in his holy temple. There is His holy word, from which the text is taken. You have assembled to hear the word of the Lord. You have learned the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. You have had sermons and lectures on all the important doctrines and duties of the Gospel. Your reason, your conscience, your understanding, your hearts have been addressed. Patiently and laboriously have one and another important feature of Gospel truth been set forth. You have had truth upon truth; truth in abundance presented to your minds, and now it is high time to awake out of sleep. We come to inquire, what is the result of all this labor? What wait ye for? In what new aspect can you expect the Gospel to be set forth? What new turn in your affairs can you expect to be more propitious than the present? When will the world appear less attractive, or business be less engrossing, or domestic cares less absorbing? When will you be in better health, more vigorous in mind, or more fit to take up your cross and follow Christ? Have you

much to give up? So much the more noble the sacrifice you make for Christ. He was *rich*, yet for your sake He became poor. He laid down His LIFE for you.

But you do not mean to delay long. Do not deceive yourselves. A year ago, ten years ago, you resolved to reform, but you remain the same. No! if you delay one moment, you are willing to delay for ever. You are willing, in a deep and awful sense, to die; a sense in which God employs the word. You have *no* intention of repenting. You are fixed in sin and unbelief; and you should look upon yourself as one who is determined to abide the issue; and to let things take their course; and to let the sands slowly slip through the glass, until your short hour of life is gone, and then die eternally.

Oh, retire with the conviction that it is God, and not man, who asks this question; that it is the language of surprise and sorrow, yet of calmness, and a determination to let justice after this take its course, and be glorified. Oh, why will you, my hearers, for whom so many prayers have been offered and so many sermons preached, why will ye die? Why will you experience such a *reverse?* Now you may retire to your habitations; to your comforts and luxuries; to find every want supplied (and anticipated); to hear from every quarter the language of affection, or obedience and respect. Why, then, stand in jeopardy every hour, and of what? Not of losing all these; not of going down to the grave, though that is change enough; not of death temporal, but of such dying as God urges you to avoid, as the son of God came to deliver you from, and the Holy Ghost sends men to warn you of, and now to persuade you to escape.

Take home, then, the text. Let conscience whisper it to you in the dead of night. Let the heart, if now it

feels, cherish its present impressions and not obliterate them. Let parents put the question to children; children to parents; husbands to wives; wives to husbands; sisters to brothers; brothers to sisters. Say no more. Say only this. Say it seriously, affectionately, at a favorable moment. Or open the Bible and point it out, and say nothing, and the work may at length be done.

V.

THE WISE DECISION.

BY EDWARD LATHROP, D.D.,

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By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.—HEBREWS xi. 24–26.

I ADDRESS myself at this time particularly to the young, and especially to young men, who must soon determine those questions which will be decisive of their eternal destiny. I take, as the illustration of my subject, the happy decision of Moses, at that critical period in his life, when he was pressed by conflicting motives, and when, upon the choice which he then made, the scale which had trembled on its poise, turned on the side of duty to God,—of a life of holiness,—of an aim at heaven. What a momentous decision! To-day I speak to those who have reached that same critical point,—who are pressed by similar conflicting motives, and whose decision, perhaps at this time—while listening to this sermon—may determine the whole of their subsequent career, both for time and for eternity. God grant that such decision may be unto life and not unto death!

We are to notice, in the first place, what it was that Moses declined, when he "refused to be called the son

of Pharaoh's daughter." The text says, "the pleasures of sin for a season," and "the treasures in Egypt."

Let us glance rapidly at the circumstances of the case, as indicated in the language just quoted,—"the pleasures of sin," and "the treasures in Egypt." Egypt, at the time here referred to, was the most powerful kingdom on earth, and probably the most corrupt. Its court was the centre of luxury and vice. Thither resorted the inquisitive and pleasure-seeking of all nations, attracted either by the reputation of the schools of learning there established, or by the facilities there afforded for indulging in every species of animal enjoyment, from the most refined to the most debasing. The character of the Egyptian court, at the period here spoken of, is well described by the phrase, "the pleasures of sin." Whatever a depraved or fastidious taste could covet, the abundant resources of Egypt readily supplied. The riches of the empire were unbounded. Egypt was the granary of the world. Into its treasury was poured the wealth of all other inhabited portions of the globe; and such was the political structure of the government, that the king and the king's household possessed almost unlimited control of the resources of the nation. To speak of "the treasures in Egypt," is but another form of expression for affluence the most abundant and lavish. In one word, the Egyptian court, at the time of which I now speak, was the most attractive spot on earth to one who was in pursuit of mere worldly pleasure.

Moses had been rescued trom the Nile by the daughter—and, as is generally supposed, the only child—of the then reigning monarch. By her he had been adopted, and brought up as her own son. The design of the princess, says Josephus, was to make Moses "her father's successor, if it should please God she should have no legitimate child of her own." But, be this as it may,

there can be no doubt that the intention of the royal princess was to make Moses her own heir, and the possessor, ultimately, of the vast treasure which she would inherit as the only child of the most powerful monarch on earth. This fact is distinctly referred to in the text, in which it is said, that Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"—that is, the treasures of which he was the prospective heir.

Such were the outward circumstances under which the Hebrew child grew up. Wealth, and luxury, and power were the attendants of his childhood and youth; even to mature manhood these had ministered to his daily desires; and all this wealth, and luxury, and power, he had been led to believe, were to be his to an unlimited extent. Thus, to the son of a slave, were proffered the pleasures, and the possessions of the mightiest empire on which the sun then shone.

But there is here another circumstance to be noted. Moses, while thus flattered, and, no doubt, greatly influenced by the motives addressed to his ambition, and his natural love of pleasure, was, at the same time, the subject of other influences, which, all unknown to the giddy throng about him, had been brought to bear upon him in his infancy and early boyhood. The woman, employed by the Egyptian princess to be the nurse of the rescued child, was his own Hebrew mother. From her lips he received his earliest instructions. By her he had been taught the knowledge of the true God, and had been made acquainted with the reserved blessings promised to his chosen people. The impress of her warm maternal heart was upon him, and no subsequent influences were able to efface this beautiful image from his soul. Oh, a mother's love! a mother's godly conversation and example! Who can estimate their influence?

But you see what Moses had to contend with in the shape of insinuating, seductive temptations. Riches, pleasure, power—all that could appeal to an ardent and ambitious mind,—and all, nay, immensely more than that for which multitudes in our day are ready to barter heaven with its eternal "recompense of reward,"—all these were temptingly offered to Moses, and all these he declined, *rejected*, when he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

And you will here mark especially the *motive* which influenced Moses in this decision. He declined the pleasures of the Egyptian court, not because he was insensible to the attractions of that court, and not because he was destitute of those natural propensities which inclined him to gratify the desires of the flesh; but he rejected these things because they were "the pleasures of sin"—because he could not indulge in them and be guiltless. And he rejected "the treasures in Egypt," not because he might not, under other circumstances, possess riches, but because he could not hold *these* treasures without doing violence to his conscience, and disobeying the law of his God.

Notice, now, in the next place, what it was that Moses made choice of rather than "the pleasures of sin," and "the treasures in Egypt:"—"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." Who were the people of God, whose lot this man preferred, and whose destiny he was willing to share? They were the most abused, and, outwardly, the most degraded of all slaves. They were the very scorn and contempt of the proud Egyptian nobility. Their task-masters were the most cruel, their work the most servile, their privileges the most scanty, and their sufferings, all things considered, almost unendurable. Verily, they were an afflicted people. Oppression had ground them to the

dust. Wearisome days and nights were appointed them. How few, even of the lowly and despairing, would have chosen this people as their companions and brethren? But who, with the flattering prospects of Moses before him, would have turned away from the treasures of Egypt, and the pleasures of that seductive court, for the companionship and the destiny of a nation of slaves?

And here, as we pass, I wish you to notice another thing. As Moses did not relinquish the pleasures which surrounded him, in the household of Pharaoh, because he was insensible to the influence of such attractions, and as he did not decline the riches which were proffered him in Egypt, because it would have been wrong in him, under other circumstances, to possess riches; so, in this latter case, he did not choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, because he had any natural fondness for suffering, or because affliction, in itself, was a thing to be desired, or because it would furnish a meritorious ground of his acceptance with God; but, with a higher aim, he preferred the people of God, *in spite of their afflictions;* he preferred them because they *were* the people of God, notwithstanding their poverty, and destitution, and disgrace; he preferred them, because truth and righteousness were on their side, while, on the other side, were only falsehood and sin, although concealed under the names of pleasure and riches.

We are to consider next, the *principle* which guided the choice of Moses, and the *end* which he had in view in making his decision. "By faith, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" by faith he declined to participate in "the pleasure of sin;" by faith he rejected the offer of Egypt's treasure, and by faith he preferred all the affliction and reproach which he should suffer on account of his attachment to the people of God, and his belief in a coming Redeemer; "for he had re-

spect unto the recompense of the reward." This language, taken in connection with what has already been said, touching the motive of Moses in declining the pleasures of sin, exonerates him from all imputation of selfishness, in seeking "the recompense of the reward." It was a *holy* reward which Moses had respect to, a reward which was to be found in the way of obedience, and not simply *happiness*, irrespective of the means by which it might be attained. Hence it was a just, a religious motive. As, indeed, it is recorded of the Author of salvation Himself: "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." It was a reward which Jesus had in view when he gave his back to the smiters, and when he poured out his soul unto death; but it was a reward which involved in the highest degree the glory of the Father who had sent him. Thus Moses looked forward to a future recompense, but it was not the recompense solely which stimulated his obedience. The recompense was a gracious bestowment which he certainly desired, but which he desired in no other way than as it should be connected with God's glory, and his own holiness.

But we were considering the principle which animated him. It was faith we are told. By faith he contemplated a joy which would be full and abiding long after the pleasures of sin had vanished, and left nothing behind them but the inevitable sting; by faith he grasped the riches which would endure, and be satisfying long after the treasures in Egypt had turned into dust and been forgotten; by faith he looked beyond the present affliction of the people among whom he had cast his lot,—beyond their servitude, their privations, and their disgrace. "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible;" and so strong was he in the strength of this divine principle, that he boldly "forsook Egypt, not

fearing the wrath of the King." It was a small matter to him what he should suffer from men, or what of personal convenience and pleasure he should forego, for these things were only for a season; "the recompense of the reward," which was laid up for him in heaven, would be imperishable and fadeless forever.

Now this decision of Moses, as it seems to me, was eminently *wise;* and I appeal to every one of you, for the correctness of this conclusion. I have no question whatever, as to the verdict of your enlightened and sober judgments. Moses in rejecting the pleasures of sin, and the offered treasures of Egypt, in view of the future reward acted wisely, and as every sane man should act in a similar case. There was no fanaticism in this decision, no mere impulse of feeling. It was the mature, thoughtful act of an intelligent mind. See how the case stands now. Thousands of years have fled, since the body of Moses was laid in its unknown sepulchre, in the valley of Moab. For all these centuries has he been enjoying the fruition of that faith which led him "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," and to bear "the reproach of Christ," than to possess "the treasures in Egypt," or "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Where is Moses to-day? And where are the Pharaohs? And where the pride and pomp of ancient Egypt? And where the giddy throng that mingled in the dance, or that quaffed the wine-cups in their banquet-halls? And where the treasures which built the pyramids, and reared proud monuments to the names of Kings? Alas! these all were only "for a season," and have long since perished. But "the recompense of the reward" which the man of God discerned by faith, and upon which he has already entered, shall be forever and ever. He has received "a Kingdom which cannot be moved." Tell me, was not Moses wise in his decision, notwithstanding all the tem-

poral losses, and the obloquy to which that decision subjected him?

And now I bring the subject home to you, my hearers,—to you, young men, who, as I have said, may be this day on the point of a decision which will determine the whole of your future career, and be final as to your eternal happiness or misery. The pleasures of sin are in the one scale; but remember, they are the pleasures of *sin*, and they are only *for a season*. In a short time —a very few years at most,—these pleasures will have lost their sweetness, and the dregs of the cup which you must drink, if you now prefer sinful pleasures, will be full of bitterness. In the end, that which seems to you now to be only joy, will "bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder." In the other scale is the service of Christ—an intelligent, rational devotion to the cause of truth and righteousness. In this service you may have to suffer something of affliction. I will not disguise the truth. The people of God have oftentimes to pass through severe trials, before they are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." In this service you may have to endure reproach for the name of Jesus. "Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." In one shape or another, "the trial of your faith" must be experienced. But, be it so; and even granting that your entire earthly pilgrimage shall be one unbroken series of afflictions; admitting that it may be best, in the wisdom of God, that poverty, and suffering, and reproach shall fill up the measure of your days upon earth,—admitting all this, I ask, which is the wise decision, the service of God here, and "the recompense of the reward" hereafter, or "the pleasures of sin for a season," and, in the end, "the wages of sin," which "is death?" What I want, at this time, is not the verdict, simply, of your

judgments, for that I have already; but what I want is the decision of your *hearts*, and your determination, in the fear of God, and in reliance upon his promised aid, to seek, at once, "that good part, which shall not be taken away from" you. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," and let your decision, I pray you, be like that of Moses; choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," if it must needs be that afflictions come, "than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." "For a season.!" Contrast these words—the meaning of them—with the meaning of those other words with which my text closes: "the recompense of the reward." Here is an example in point. A few days ago,* two deaths occurred in this city and its immediate vicinity, within six hours of each other. The one was the death of a young man, aged about twenty-four years, of whom it is said, by one who had taken pains to make particular inquiry, that "he was a young man of promise, being an excellent anatomist, a skillful linguist, and one who might have risen in the world; but habits of dissipation, disobedience of parents, and evil company wrought his ruin." He was a young man who preferred "the pleasures of sin," and, truly, they were pleasures which lasted only "for a season." How brief! how illusive! how fatal! He died suddenly—he died upon the gallows, a convicted murderer, with the blood of a fellow-creature upon his soul! From that scene, terminating a life of sinful pleasure, pass with me to another which transpired a few hours later. Under the roof of an unpretending dwelling in this city, a circle of weeping friends are gathered about the couch of an aged man who has just ceased to breathe.† That man, while yet young, had made the choice of Moses. The pleasures

* January 8, 1858. † Rev. Dr. Knox.

of sin he renounced, and the people of God, in good report and in evil report, he determined should be his people. For nearly half a century he stood upon the walls of Zion, in this city, an affectionate counselor of the young, and a messenger to all of the good tidings of the gospel. For nearly half a century he walked our streets, an example of purity of life, and of unostentatious devotion to the cause of the Saviour, whose service he chose in his early manhood. When that man died, every friend of virtue and religion in this community felt that a public benefactor had ceased from among the living; and when he was borne to his burial, thousands pressed around his remains, anxious to pay the last tribute of respect and affection to "the memory of the just." Both these men are now dead and buried. But is this all? When the one man died upon the scaffold, was that the end of the pleasure-seeker? And when the other man died in his chamber, was that the end of the venerable servant of Christ? Where now are the spirits of these departed men? Could I lift the curtain which separates the present from the future, I would show you where they are. This I am not permitted to do; but I can tell you what God says in his holy book. "All murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." And again, it is said, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." "The righteous hath hope in his death." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." "The recompense of the reward" is theirs for ever.

My hearers, will you decide this question? Will you decide it *now?* Whom will you serve? Life and death are set before you. Now is the time for your decision; and the decision, remember, must be *your own.* God calls upon you by his Spirit to make your choice. He has provided for you all needful helps. "IF THOU BE WISE, THOU SHALT BE WISE FOR THYSELF; BUT IF THOU SCORNEST, THOU ALONE SHALT BEAR IT."

VI.

CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

BY GEORGE W. BETHUNE, D.D.,

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Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me. —Rev. iii. 20.

When we read the gracious words of the Saviour in the Gospel, we might well think that divine condescension could go no further. There, He bids us come to him, to pray for pardon and not faint, to knock at the door of mercy, to strive for entrance at the strait gate, promising us certain and full salvation, if we thus, with sincere earnestness, endeavor after eternal life; and, surely, they, who will not seek him, deserve to perish. But here, in our holy text, He takes the very means to win our love which he requires of us to win his. He comes nigh to us, stands knocking at our hearts, calling upon us to open the door and admit him, entreating leave to enter that he may have fellowship with us, and we with him. The last vestige of excuse is taken away, the last shadow of doubt should pass from our minds. We need no longer seek for Him, He has found us. The question is no longer, Will He hear our prayer? but, Shall we hear His? Not, Will He open the door of heaven to us? but, Shall we keep our hearts closed against Him? His readiness to save is assured; it is now for us to decide whether we will be saved or not.

Our text occurs in the epistle to the Church of Laodicea, which had become lukewarm and self-righteous, though richly favoured with all the means of grace. They knew what the Gospel offered and what it required; but they neither entreated divine help, nor devoted themselves to the divine service. The same course is, therefore, required of them as of those who had never professed themselves Christians; they must come to Christ for spiritual life, "be zealous and repent." Hence, and conformably with other Scriptures, we may safely infer that the words before us are applicable to all who hear the truth, and have the offer of salvation pressed upon them.

The order of thought is simple:

First, CHRIST WITHOUT AND THE DOOR SHUT.

Secondly, THE DOOR OPEN AND CHRIST WITHIN.

I. CHRIST WITHOUT AND THE DOOR SHUT.

You readily understand the figure. The blessed Saviour represents himself as seeking our love, trust, and communion. He comes, as it were, to the door of the sinner's heart, but finds it closed. He knocks and calls out, that we may know He is waiting for admission, and withdraw the barrier which prevents his entrance: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." Thus we have discovered to us: The affectionate zeal of Christ for our salvation; and, The reason why any of us are not saved.

1. The affectionate zeal of Christ for our salvation. He comes to us. He saw us lost in guilt and sin, neither able to expiate our offences against God, nor willing to repent of them; and he came from heaven to earth, assuming our nature, that he might make an infinitely meritorious atonement, and, having opened for us the

way of reconciliation, offer us the gracious help of his Holy Spirit for our return to God, and eternal life. Yes! He came so nigh to us lost sinners, that He became like to us in all things except sin; nay, as the Elder Brother, the kinsman Redeemer of his people, He undertook their full deliverance from all the consequences of their rebellion, bearing their griefs, carrying their sorrows, grappling with their temptations, working out their righteousness by his own perfect voluntary obedience, and dying—on the shameful, bitter, then accursed cross—their death to the broken law, that they might receive eternal life. Even now, upon the throne of his glory, He has not laid aside his sympathy, for he has carried up with him to the right hand of the Father, the body which felt our pains, the heart which bled in our sorrows, and the mind that endured our trials. Blessed be His name! He is not the less man, though "crowned with glory and honor," than when he resisted our Tempter in the wilderness, sat way-worn and weary at the gate of Sychar, wept at the tomb of his friend, staggered under his cross amidst the hootings of the multitude, or gave up the ghost in a cry of agony. Every pulsation of his human breast reminds Him of his brethren below; He pleads for them as he shows the scars of his crucifixion; He exerts his almighty power in ordering all providence for their good, and in embellishing the mansions of heaven for their eternal home.

This nearness to us is continued in his gospel. By his Holy Scriptures, and various appointed means of instruction out of the Scriptures, He makes known the way of life which he has opened, invites all who hear to partake of his grace, reiterates his merciful warnings against eternal death, and assurances of eternal bliss for all who believe. He has come so nigh to us, my friends, that none of us can be ignorant of our danger, or the mode

of escape. His inspired Word lies on our tables; his ministers proclaim the truth as we sit in the house of God; his sacraments exhibit it in their expressive forms; faithful Christians testify it by their lives and conversation; the avowed repentance of the once ungodly gives proof of its active power. All these declare his compassion for us, and his right, his readiness, his desire to save every soul that will accept of his salvation. How may we doubt his compassion, after all he has done and suffered for us? or his right to save, since the Father has exalted him as a Prince and a Saviour? or his readiness and desire to save us, when we read his many "exceeding great and precious promises?"

Thus does Christ come and *stand* before our hearts; and we should hasten out to entreat that he would come in as their rightful Lord and most welcome guest. But his affectionate zeal is not satisfied without farther demonstrations. "Behold, saith He, I stand at the door and *knock*." This is a strong figure, showing a closer application of the gospel to our souls by the Holy Spirit.

Just before our divine Lord finished his work on earth, he told his disciples: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter. [whom in another place he declares to be the Holy Ghost] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He fulfilled his promise, after his ascension, by sending down the Spirit at the Pentecost; and, ever since, that Holy Agent has been present on earth, in a greater or less degree, to breathe an energy through the means of grace without which they, even the Scriptures themselves, are utterly ineffectual. Hence every influence from the truth upon our souls is ascribed to

the Holy Ghost; and, whenever we are conscious of such influence, we may know that the Spirit is exerting his divine power upon us. He it is that enlightens our minds, stirs up our consciences, and pierces our sensibilities; so that unfaithful Christians are said to "grieve" and "wound," while the obstinately impenitent "resist" and "quench" the Holy Spirit. Here, in the text, our blessed Saviour declares that he makes a direct application, not merely to our senses by external means, but to our inner heart by his Holy Spirit.

He *stands* before us, it is true, in every page of his gospels, every evangelical sermon, every Christian advice, every sacrament, every striking providence, or whatever ought to make us consider his claims; yet, through our stupid occupation with the world, we may not perceive his nearness: but there are times when the sinner is compelled to feel that the truth concerns him, and his heart is stirred by it, as a *knock* at the door sounds through a house. Even then he may be so taken up with other things as to pay but little attention, yet he hears the knocking, and knows that Jesus is at the door; or the knocking is repeated louder and louder, until he trembles with awe, and, if he do not yield, must brace himself up with an insane hardihood to resist the summons.

Who among us, my hearers, has not had some such occasions, and, notwithstanding an assumed indifference, perhaps cultivated skepticism, been convinced, by a testimony in his conscience far stronger than any arguments for the truth of Christianity which its professed advocates can use, that God does speak by the Scriptures, and that the gospel is the voice of Christ calling upon him to repent and be saved? These convictions may have been wrought apparently by various means, with some may be more frequent or deeper than with

others, but they certainly are the effects of the Holy Spirit directly applying the truth to our hearts, for our souls' good, if we will so receive it; and are so many proofs that Christ not only offers his salvation to all, but has singled us out by special, personal, peculiar offers of pardon and grace.

2. The reason why any of us are not saved is, then, obvious. It must be our own fault in not yielding to the solicitations of divine mercy. Christ is mighty to save; that is seen in His perfect and accepted atonement. He is willing to save all who believe in his name; that is seen in the offers of his Gospel, which are free to all. He is ready to save each of us, every one of us; that is seen in his knocking by his Spirit at the door of our hearts. No one can say, "I am too great a sinner to be saved," for that were to deny the infinite merit of the atonement which God himself has provided and declared sufficient; nor, "I may go to Christ and he may not receive me," for Christ waits not until we go to him, but comes to us; nor, "I must wait until the Holy Spirit draws me to him," for the Spirit is already at our bosom's door, calling upon us to admit him. The question now is not, Will the Saviour accept us? but, Shall we reject him? I say *reject* him, for since He has offered himself to us, we reject him, if we do not acknowledge him and trust him as our Saviour. Our hearts had long been closed against him, and we may not have known, or did not consider, that He was standing without; but his knocking has reminded us of our guilty indifference, and declares his desire to enter. Why, then, is He not already within our hearts?—Because we will not open the door, but keep it shut. He calls to us, and we know his divine voice; but we will not obey. He tries the latch—pressing with merciful force against the bar-

rier, to see if we are willing that He should come in; but our love of the world and of sin is like a bolt barring the door fast, and we put not forth our hand to draw it back—nay, we press against the barrier on our side, and so resist his gracious will. If we were but willing to give up sin, if we but ceased striving against him, He would at once enter and shed abroad his love through our hearts. He could, and (blessed be His name!) sometimes does, break down the sinner's opposition; for his power when He puts it forth is irresistible; but we are nowhere justified in waiting for such compulsion. He commands us to open the door, to put forth the hand of faith and unbar the bolt, to repent and welcome him. Do you cavil and say, "I must wait for His grace before I can do this?" Oh, foolish soul! Why thus wrest the Scripture to your own destruction? His grace is waiting for you. The Holy Spirit is urging himself upon you; and, certainly as He is knocking at your hearts, so certainly, if you will yield to his striving, all needed grace shall be yours.

Consider, then, I pray you, my fellow-sinner, how inexcusable is your present state! You alone stand in the way of your own salvation. After all that Christ has done for you; after all his kind warnings and kinder promises; after all his knockings, and calls, and strivings with your conscience, you will not open your heart to God, who comes to you, not as a Judge and Avenger, but as a Saviour and Friend. You defy his terrors, though they burn fiercely to the lowest hell; but you do worse, you despise his mercy, you treat his love with contempt, you resist his official divine messenger, the Holy Ghost. The Spirit may have knocked often; the Saviour have stood without long; you have kept God waiting at the door of your heart; some worldly pleasure, some petty business, perhaps only a sluggish

indisposition to an effort at repentance, has been your motive to bid the divine mercy, whose price was the blood of Christ and whose advocate is the Holy Ghost, stay for your convenient leisure. Oh! cease this ungrateful, impious hesitation! The Saviour has waited long, but he will not wait for ever. In another moment, that knocking may cease, that pleading voice be heard no more, and the disappointed Herald of heavenly compassion pass on, never to return. Then you will be again at ease; the godless heart within you abandon all its chambers to unchecked sin; the cross of Christ seem to you as a superstitious fable, and the story of redeeming love be "as tedious as an oft-told tale;" but it will be the ease of a soul abandoned by the Saviour to its folly, the reckless delirium that precedes the eternal death of an immortal suicide. Think of the awful anguish in which you will knock at the door of heaven, when the Voice which you would not hear as it pleaded with you, answers, "Depart from me, I never knew you!" and the almighty hand, that knocked at your heart in vain, thrusts you away to everlasting despair. Yet it is not too late; at least, I trust it is not. Fling open the door, call to the entreating Saviour, beg the insulted Spirit to return, and it may be that He will! Unspeakable is the blessedness of those to whom He enters in mercy; for consider—

II. The door open and Christ within. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

Here is divine indwelling, divine fellowship, divine satisfaction.

1. Divine indwelling: "I will come in to him." Well might we repeat the note of admiration that begins the text, "Behold!"—O beloved Lord Jesus Christ, we won-

dered at thy condescension, when thou didst assume our nature, for "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!" Yet what was thy birth, as the Son of Man, compared to this new incarnation! Then Thou didst enter an infirm, but sinless body, sanctified for thee, by the power of the Highest, and dwell with a pure soul that had never a shadow of sin; now Thou sendest thy Holy Spirit to overshadow a rebel sinner, and enterest a body polluted by corrupt lust, to dwell with a soul all defiled by sin; there to contend against evil passions, carnal desires, wordly longings, and unbelieving pride. It is even so, my brethren. Hear the Master's own words: "I will come in to him." It is no extravagant enthusiasm to say with an apostle, that the believer is a "temple of the Holy Ghost," that Christ is "formed within him, the hope of glory," that "he lives; yet not he, but Christ liveth in him." Yes, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," claims for himself two dwelling-places; for He saith, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

It is the method which the sanctifying Saviour takes to prepare the converted sinner here, for the full fruition of God in glory. As a divinity within a shrine, He sheds abroad his glorious light through the soul, dissipating its doubts, healing its errors, and confirming its hopes. As life within an organized frame, it prompts to holy action, and gives strength for godly purposes. As a germ within a womb, it grows from weakness to a mature birth amidst the sons of God above. Christ by his Spirit dwells within the believer, no longer afar off, not to be sought after painfully and anxiously, but beating in the love of his heart, speaking with his lips, seeing with his eyes, hearing with his ears, thinking with his thoughts, working with his hands, and walking with his

feet in the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Not that this enlightening, strengthening, sanctifying influence is at once perfectly transcendent over the corruption; but the purifying and restoring process is at once begun, and certainly progressive to a complete consummation. Here is our comfort and trust when struggling with sin, and doubt, and temptation. The grace is ours if we will exert it; for when we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, God is working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is our calling, personally to strive against our corruption, and emulate a perfect holiness; yet without Christ we can do nothing, but can do all things through Christ strengthening us. We must open the door for Him to enter our hearts, and, after he has entered, if we cherish his loving presence, he will dwell with us as the earnest of our eternal life. Oh, how holy should the Christian be in whose heart Christ lives, and whose body is a temple of the Holy Ghost!

There is divine fellowship. The Saviour comes in, but with what purpose—as an enemy, or as a friend? We deserved his wrath, and well may we tremble as He who is our Judge comes to search our inmost thoughts. But He puts all this anxiety to rest: "I will come in, and sup with him and he with me." He breaks the bread, and thus makes with us a covenant of love, which he will surely keep, and it would be a breach of most sacred hospitality in us to violate. He sits down with us as friend with friend, as brother with brother, at a sacrament of a familiar table. He talks with us, and invites us to talk with Him. We tell Him of our sorrows and our joys, our perplexities and our hopes, our difficulties and our desires; "He takes of the things of the Father and shows them unto us," until the chamber of communion glows within us, filled with light, and peace, and joy.

Thus the Beloved One inhabits the believer's heart until He receives the believer up to dwell in Him forever.

2. There are divine satisfactions. "Ah! blessed Master," might the penitent ask, "thou sayest that thou wilt sup with me, but where shall I find a feast for such a guest?" "Cumber not thyself about thy serving," is the affectionate reply, "thou shalt sup with me." The Master brings his own provision—the bread of his holy truth, the wine of his holy joy. He spreads them upon the board, he extends them to his grateful host. "Eat, O friend," He exclaims; "drink abundantly." The bread will give thee strength; the wine will cheer thy heart. That divine word was His meat when a pilgrim and a laborer upon earth; the anticipations of that joy animated Him to endure the cross, and despise the shame. Now He comes to sympathize with the weak Christian, whose trembling feet are endeavoring to follow the path his Master's footsteps mark as the way of life; and he shares with his disciples his own comforts, for, "having been tempted himself, he well knows how to succor them that are tempted." And thus the Saviour sups with the penitent, and the penitent with the Saviour. Daily is the bread renewed, daily is the water of life turned into cheering wine; until the believer attains whither "the Forerunner hath for us entered," where "they hunger no more, neither thirst any more forever," because the feast is perpetual, even the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And who is he to whom the blessed and holy Lord makes this astonishing offer? Where is the soul thus distinguished by the divine condescension? My fellow-sinner, hearer of the gospel, at whose heart the Spirit has been knocking, it is *you!* "If *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." "If any man;" surely that

means you, me, any one to whom the gospel is preached, and with whom the Spirit witnesses. See, then, the choice set before you! Will you keep the door of your hearts shut, and the Saviour out? or will you open them and receive the Saviour in as your God, your friend, your divine entertainer? It is for you to decide. Oh, the blessedness of that penitent into whose open heart the Lord of glory enters! Oh, the unspeakable misery of the obstinate sinner who rejects Christ the Saviour, now, to be rejected, at the Great Day, by Christ the Judge! Oh, save us, thou compassionate Jesus, from such a doom! Break, break the door away, and fill us with Thy power, O most mighty Holy Ghost!

VII.

UNANSWERED PRAYERS.

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Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.—JAMES iv. 3.

THAT alone deserves the name of Prayer, which complies with certain well-defined conditions specified by him who has established the laws of prayer. It is important that we should study well these conditions; and if we do, we shall find the reasons why so much that is called prayer seems lost in the air, seems not to rise above the ceiling, seems thrown away. That is to say, we shall learn why men "ask and receive not." There is something "amiss" in the petitioner or the petition. It is all-important, I say, to understand what this is, because a wrong idea of prayer and its answer will beget much mischief: leading first to disappointment, then doubt, then unbelief and formalism, and then to the entire neglect of this vital duty, this grand privilege of the creature and sinner—*an appeal to God.* I propose, then, to give a brief account of some of the principal reasons why what is called prayer is so often unanswered. This is the single object I have in view, and I shall aim at the utmost simplicity and brevity in tracing these reasons. Without further preface, let me say—

1. Some ask amiss, and therefore in vain, *because they*

appear before God with unrepented sin upon their consciences. Their attitude is not the befitting attitude of a suppliant who is approaching not only a great God, but a holy God. They are not humbled. There is a lurking love of sin which taints their prayers. There is some habitual sin perhaps, some evil temper or evil conduct over which they have not truly bemoaned as an insult to the good God to whom they bring their petitions. And although the things asked for may be altogether proper and desirable, and though they may be sought with a certain earnestness, yet so long as sin, any known sin, lies unrepented and overlooked in the heart, they ask "*amiss*" in the most radical sense of the word. It is not inconsistent with the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer, that when the life is full of vanity and corruption, and marked by practices denounced by God, the occasionally conscience-prompted prayer should be disregarded. The first cry of such a petitioner should be a penitent cry for forgiveness; the first duty, the duty of self-abasement.

The humility which God has assured us he will not despise, is not the humility of the creature merely, but of the sinner. What else but this is implied in the necessity of asking everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why in his name? Because at no time and under no conceivable circumstances could we hope to be answered for our own sakes. The very prayers and other acts of devotion of the best believer have so much of the taint of evil, that unless he be looked upon in the face of *God's anointed*, they will not be tolerated. He is our Atoner, our Advocate, our Intercessor—and all our hope of being listened to at all lies in the meritorious efficiency of his expiatory sacrifice, by which he bought for us the wedding garment in which to appear before God. All this implies an absolute sense

of unworthiness, and consequent repentance and renunciation of our sin before we can bring our special requests into the audience-chamber. Yes; the first cry of every prayer ought to be the "God be merciful to me a sinner," which made the publican's prayer successful.

At this critical period, when the Lord has sent his awakening Spirit so simultaneously, so extensively, and so unostentatiously upon the land, it is of primary importance to feel that the first call of "this Spirit of grace and of supplication" is a call to mourn over our personal and social offences, by looking upon him whom they have pierced. Let the family of the house of David, and of the house of Levi, and of the house of Shimei, "mourn apart," and their wives apart (Zech. xii. 10–14): for their declensions, their backslidings, their lukewarmness, their unbelief and omissions, have been very grievous before the Lord. How numerous and inexcusable they are, every one can see who looks at his own case. This attitude of contrition, an attitude far removed from the self-content and self-complacency which says "I am rich and have need of nothing," is the only one in which we may hope to meet a blessing from the God of Jacob, which shall both lift up his people to a higher level of holiness, and subdue to the obedience of Christ the careless and impenitent who swarm in our families, our congregations, our towns and cities.

Go, my friends, lie in the dust, put on sackcloth, put away iniquity—else your prayers, personal and social, will be as water spilled. For thus it is written, and let us ponder well the words—"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God,

thou wilt not despise. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up." While on the other hand, the "Lord, Lord!" of the wicked, whether inspired by fear or presumption, will be an abomination: "Depart, I never knew you." "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean!"

2. Another reason why so much that is called prayer is unanswered is, that the petitioner *does not really desire the thing which the terms of the prayer imply.* The words are not an index of the true promptings of the heart. They are lacking in the essential element of honesty. Many prayers, eloquent and fervent though they seem, are only words, not so much meant for the ear of God, as for man's ears: hypocritical, hollow make-believes, offensive to him who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. Is it inconsistent with the divine pledge that God will hear and answer our requests, that such requests as he sees to be insincere should be not only not granted, but set down in the book of remembrance as crimes?

The formalism which counts its prayers, the ostentation which puts up glowing petitions meant for human ears, even the earnest conscience-prompted cries extorted by temporary fears, are condemned as offences by him who seeth not as man seeth. Common reason tells us this, and the word of God enjoins us to weigh well our words, that they may not go beyond the reality. Let us look deep into the heart, and inquire what are its real impulses, its real views of good, its uppermost objects of desire. The supreme desires of a man, whether they be for good or evil objects, are his real prayers. It is not enough to ask in words for humility or any other Christian grace; it is not enough to ask in

words for some blessing for our families, the church or the world. They must be sincere, hearty words.

Are *you* able to say, "Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not forth out of feigned lips." Oh, remember that "the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him—*in truth.* Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." And let the warning of the Saviour strike you dumb when you are about to offer heartless petitions: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy concerning you—this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

3. Another reason why much that passes under the name of prayer is unanswered: *It is the prompting of a selfish, world-loving state of mind, which puts temporal before spiritual good as the predominant object of desire.* I speak now, not so much of the expressed as of the secret desires of the soul. It discovers a gross ignorance of relative values that the soul should ever place that which is fugitive before that which is permanent. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." To reverse this order in our secret prayers, is a proof that our hearts are not right with God, and we have no cause of complaint if such selfish petitions should be disregarded. Suppose a case. If a man fix his eyes upon some success in life as the chief good at the moment, or if the absorbing desire of his heart be to escape some threatened temporal evil—sickness, loss of property, and such like; although he may not altogether omit from his prayers the weightier matters of the soul, its growth in the knowledge and grace of Christ, the subjugation of worldly passion, the forgiveness of sin, greater love and likeness to God in Christ, and kindred graces—yet by making that last which should be

first and that first which should be last, he virtually declares himself destitute of a right knowledge of himself, of the world, and of God.

Prayers thus reversed, have no right, we repeat, to expect an answer. Such were the prayers referred to in the text. They who asked, asked amiss in this respect, that they asked for something to expend upon their pleasures. But God has not promised to answer every man's prayer. It is the prayer of the "*righteous*," by which is meant the renewed, and justified, and spiritual man that availeth much. This reasonable condition of the promise is made plain by the hearer of prayer himself. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will lift him up, because he hath known my name; he shall call upon me and I will answer him." This is an epitome of the word of God on this point, and it turns on the grand principle, that prayer being the index of love as well as of want, the supreme love of God as a portion, and of holiness as the only way to the enjoyment of that portion, will force all temporal things into a subordinate place among our petitions.

It is not meant by this remark, that we may not make wealth, or health, or influence, or any other temporal good an object of prayer. If it be lawful to aim at these things, it is lawful to pray for them. But only on two conditions. The first we have already noted, namely, that they should be counted secondary to the blessings of the spiritual life. The second is, that our motive for desiring them is a full purpose to devote them to the service of God. And be sure of this, my Christian brethren, that should you ever transgress these conditions in a fit of selfish forgetfulness—you shall not only not have your desires fulfilled, but God will chastise you until you are forced to abandon your idols and

cry, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee?"

4. Consider now another explanation of unanswered prayers. *They are not mingled with thankfulness.* They are forgetful of past and present benefits. It is right that an ungrateful beneficiary who is always asking but never thanking should be turned away till he learns to have more decency. Look at the way in which many receive the good gifts of God's providence; taking them as if they were matters of course, or accidents in which God's goodness had no share, or the results of their own wisdom, industry, or merit,—and then remark how cheaply they are rated the moment some afflictive trial comes. A single want is permitted to shut from their view a thousand mercies. Can we wonder that the selfish cry of such a soul should be disregarded? Why, what right has any one to complain even if nothing of earthly joy be left but that which springs from the hope of heaven? To be out of perdition is a grand mercy for which to praise God. Everywhere throughout Scripture is gratitude represented as a necessary quality of acceptable prayer. A humble heart not only brings the sin-offering before the Lord, but the thank-offering. Hear the duties of the devout life summed up in a few brief sentences: "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High; call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me." And study well an example full of these important lessons. Paul and Silas, covered with bruises, their feet in the stocks, cast into the dungeon of the prison, if they had been like some people I have seen, would have forgotten praise in the agony of prayer for deliverance. But it seems they "sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them." Aye, and God heard them. You know what followed. I might

quote other precepts and examples, but let these suffice.

If you would have your prayers regarded, praise God for his mercies; make much of them, and do not suffer your approaches to God during even the severest crises of trial, to degenerate into reproachful, discontented, and impatient murmurings and repinings.

5. *The absence of pity for the suffering*, whether the suffering be of the soul or the body—is another explanation of unanswered prayer. Scripture is explicit on this point. Call to mind a few instances. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." While, on the other hand, "whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he himself shall cry and shall not be heard." I need not add, that the devouring of widow's houses, the holding back the wages of the hireling, will only place one's prayers, though they be as numerous as a Pharisee's, among the rankest of his offences against God.

They who are themselves dependent, should not despise the dependent. The giving of Christian alms is a condition of acceptable prayer, not because attention to the poor and suffering is a meritorious prerequisite which entitles us to be heard, but because it is the evidence of a renewed soul, that has become one of the family of the gentle, compassionate Jesus. Such will make their alms a sweet-smelling savor to Christ, and will give them in Christ's name, and in Christ's spirit. Not the doling out of a few fragments of our superfluity, nor the alms of ostentation, nor the impatient gifts which are often flung into the face of the poor, as the rewards of their importunity—none of these mockeries of the kindly, patient, unwearied sympathies of the gospel can meet the demands of the Hearer of Prayer. "Freely ye have received, freely give"—this is the broad ground upon

which Christ claims our pity, our prayers, and our gifts, for those who are suffering under spiritual, or corporeal destitution.

Do you, my friends, consider how a practical oversight of this may be one of the reasons why some great blessing you have asked of God has been withheld?

6. Another reason why we sometimes ask and receive not, is, *that we do not ask in submission to the supreme wisdom and goodness of God.* Now there are many erroneous and vague ideas as to the breadth of the divine promise to grant "*whatsoever*" we ask in faith. Does that promise mean that God has bound himself to do precisely that thing in precisely that way which the petitioner selects as the best? In effect, this would be to convert prayer into dictation. It would be for God to abdicate the throne, and give the government of all things into the hands of the creature. The promise of the Saviour which pledges his Heavenly Father to do all we ask, does not imply consequences so dishonoring to God, and so injurious to ourselves.

There are various ways in which unbelief and presumption may "limit" the Holy One of Israel. Even in respect to *spiritual good* we are required to observe the obvious conditions which God's word and providence impose upon our prayers. For example: would it comport with the economy of God in respect to the laws of progress which he has imposed on the Christian life, to consider the promise as pledging God to grant the prayer of one who should ask for instantaneous and perfect sanctification while he is yet in the body? Or, were we to ask for one grace at the expense of another, would we have a right to expect it? Or, to insist upon the bestowment of any spiritual good for ourselves, or others, in precisely that form, and by those methods, which may seem to us most natural and propitious? But without

pushing the privilege of prayer to such extremes, how broad is the field of promise—how large the spiritual blessings we may seek with fearless importunity, submitting to God the questions of time, place, and methods.

And in respect to *earthly good*, while there are many things we may ask, there is still more reason for the exercise of submission to the supreme wisdom and goodness of our Heavenly Father. When our Lord says, "Whatsoever thing ye ask, believing, ye shall have"—are we to include results, the accomplishment of which would require an absolute miracle? As, for example, the bestowment of hearing and speech upon a deaf mute? This is one limitation which the nature of things imposes upon our petitions for earthly benefits. And even in those cases where no natural impossibility is implied, our petitions for any earthly good will be circumscribed by our well-known incompetency to decide whether any particular form of earthly good would, under the circumstances, be a good to us. The possibility that health, wealth, or any other real blessing, might not be for our spiritual benefit and growth in grace, nay, might be positively evil and injurious, will make the humble believer qualify every prayer of this sort, with the proviso—"if it seem good in thy sight." It is still true, "no good thing will he withhold," but let us leave it to him to decide what, in our precise condition, *is* a good thing. Carnal fondnesses are to be carefully watched, and often crucified. Tens of thousands have occasion to thank God that he has disappointed their prayers. We might "be cursed with every granted wish," as were the Israelites when they impatiently demanded flesh in the wilderness.

7. But still oftener are our prayers defeated and unanswered by *the absence of a believing importunity.*

This lays bare the secret of God's silence in many cases. Faith in the hearer of prayer—in the efficacy of prayer—in the assurance that he will grant our reasonable desires—this is the *sine quâ non* of all successful petitions. And yet do not many who call themselves Christian believers, believe many other things more than they believe this? They look more to preaching, and reading, and conversing, than to praying. They resort more to man than to God. When the question is of the conversion, comfort, or edification of friends and children, how many rely more upon other influences than they do upon prayer: more upon man's eloquence, reasonings, teachings, persuasions, than upon God's. Without forgetting the lawful use, or disparaging the value of appropriate instrumentalities, do we not know that the efficiency of them rests supremely and sovereignly with God? "I will be sought by the house of Israel." "Oh thou that hearest prayer, to thee must all flesh come." Paul plants, Apollos waters, but God giveth the increase. We must carry all means and instruments and lay them at his feet. If we do not, if any skepticism as to this class of truths lurk in our souls, we shall find our wordy petitions rejected as spurious.

God is not nigh, God does not hear, does not care, will not give—thoughts which would thus express themselves were they framed into speech, are a dishonor to God, and will paralyze prayer, or make it a mockery. It will become a cold, hesitating, half-hearted form. We will not ask fervently, not even honestly. Faith, even as a grain of mustard seed, is a living and germinating principle in the heart; it may be weak or strong, great or small—but it must be Faith. Else we will not take God at his word, will not act on his assurance; but will bring into his presence a suspicious countenance which virtually gives him the lie. Will he honor such peti-

tioners? Better to believe too much than too little, when God has commanded us to try him, to prove him, to open wide our mouths, to ask, seek, and knock. If it be an error to prescribe how and when God shall give, an equally great error is not to believe that he *will* give, and not to ask for the great things he has said he would give. How often do we ask, and omit to look for an answer? What is it to us, that *we* cannot see how the answer can possibly come? God's power can make a way. We look at the difficulties, but how many cases are on record, in which man's extremity has proved to be God's opportunity. Instances in which he has honored an implicit, trusting faith, abound in the history of every godly man, and put to shame all suspicious doubting of his power. When these instances are set before us, we are prone to call them marvellous, and regard them as exceptional—but is it not our incredulity which makes them seem so? There is nothing marvellous in God's keeping his word, or in his having employed some remote and unexpected channel; for are not all things under his control? But we are often so incredulous as to the possibility of an answer, we deem it so improbable, that even when it comes it causes doubt, surprise, alarm. When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, although the captives had been praying for it, they felt as one that dreamed. The little prayer-meeting in the house of Mary, while engaged in praying for the imprisoned Peter, were thrown into alarm when he himself came and knocked at the door. They did not believe it. Had we more faith in prayer, we whould have more perseverance in prayer. The little word "*wait*" is often to be found in this connection, and is full of meaning. It signifies desire, hope, submission, and patient constancy. It is the appropriate and honorable attitude of the believer.

8. We mention as last, not least, of the reasons which explain much unanswered prayer, that *the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit of supplication is not sufficiently sought as to the manner and the matter of our requests.* He alone can bestow the true *manner* of prayer: the fervent desire, the reverent dependence, the importunate steadfastness, the habitual appetency which hold the soul in the true attitude before God. But it is concerning the *matter*, or objects of prayer, that I now desire to speak, regretting that the limits of our time require me to be brief.

Have you studied what the word of God teaches on this subject? The apostle, who is our best human instructor and example, forcibly declares that the Holy Spirit prays in us and for us. These are his words, "Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." In accordance with this are many other passages, such as these: "Praying with all prayer and supplication by the Spirit: Praying in or by the Holy Ghost: because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."'

These are parts of the divine science of prayer that few seem to have studied and fewer still carried into practice. Here the Spirit of God is presented as a Spirit of supplication, not only in the sense of his being the inspirer of the sacred manual of prayer, the word of God—not only as giving the right disposition of dependence and faith, but as indicating in some impressive manner *what* at any given time we may bring before

the throne as a special petition, and with an urgency so earnest and so profound as to be inarticulate. They are groanings that cannot be uttered. And what child of God, especially at critical periods of his experience, has not felt these impulses towards some object of desire, which seemed so large, so necessary, so vital as to be too big for words? Now, such prayer may well be recognized as the inwrought aspiration of the Spirit of God, and being such, we may all the more confidently believe that that longing is according to the will of God, and will be answered.

Why not then, believing hearers, seek more earnestly for this divine impulse as a guide to the matter or object of prayer: why not implore these intercessory leadings of the Spirit of God with a more frequent and importunate desire to be taught by him *what* to pray for as we ought? Guided by this heavenly Spirit of adoption, we may exercise the rights of intimacy in the house of our Father, and passing out of the region of vague generalities enter into particulars. With the written teachings of the word let us couple this secret of the Lord, and wrestling like Jacob, say, "I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me."

When I hear of an otherwise active, consistent, holy Christian saying, "I felt much impressed to pray for this or that person, or this and that thing," I recognize the impulses of the Spirit of God teaching him *what* to pray for: and when I hear, as I often have, that that prayer was answered, I comprehend the meaning of such scriptures as these: "Lord, thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear. Quicken us and we will call upon thy name."

My dear friends, if ye know these great principles belonging to the grandest of all duties and privileges—intimacy with God, reconciled and fatherly through our

Lord Jesus Christ—happy are ye if ye put them to the full stretch of their power. All things, all revelations made to faith, all ministrations, all providences, are in order to prayer. Prayer is the climax of all other duties, because it gives God the dominion, and subjects everything to him.

If these essential conditions characterize the communion of saints with God and with one another, which has, we trust, been awakened into an unwonted activity through our land—if humiliation, honesty, unselfishness, thankfulness, sympathy, submissiveness, believing importunity, and an earnest desire for the leadings of the Spirit of grace and of supplications, should mark the secret and social prayers of God's people, we may assure ourselves that he will send us down a blessing so large that there shall not be room to contain it. But not otherwise. We need large blessings. You have only to look first of all within, and then abroad upon your families, the church and the state, to be impressed with the greatness of the necessities which at all times make the arm of the Lord our only hope. Do not then restrain prayer, when he has been pleased to honor us so vastly, by placing the prayers of his people among the chief laws and forces of the world.

VIII.

MAN'S PRIDE AGAINST GOD'S GRACE.

BY JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, D.D.,

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"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' — 1 Cor. i. 30.

The whole controversy between man and his Maker on the subject of religion, may be reduced to a question between the pride of man and the grace of God. God offers grace to all men through his incarnate and crucified Son. But grace implies guilt and need in those to whom it is offered; and therefore the offer stirs up pride, even to enmity. No man ever refused a temporal favor because it was the gift of God. Multitudes enjoy such favors without acknowledging the giver; but the thought that any such gift comes from God does not depreciate it in the view of its possessor. The man of genius, however he may pride himself upon his gifts in comparison with those of his fellows, does not suffer any mortification in the thought that he has received his own talents from the Creator. Indeed, he may even make this an additional ground of exultation, as if he were in some way the favorite of heaven. One who is born to rank and wealth does not feel discredited by the intimation that Providence has favored him above others, but even counts himself the chosen of fortune

The ancients had special divinities of Poetry, of Fame, of Fortune, under whose patronage individuals were presumed to be born and to flourish, and these presiding divinities received the special homage of their protégés. It is no offence to men that they receive temporal favor or personal distinction from a higher power.

But when it comes to the question of a holy character, the suggestion that this must be sought through the grace of God, stirs up pride in the heart of man, because it carries with it the implication of guilt and need. One may accept temporal benefits at the hand of God, and, instead of being humble and grateful, may be vain and boastful, as if he were in some way worthy—even as the Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not as other men in their outward seeming. But one cannot accept the grace of God which bringeth salvation, without owning himself a sinner, in need of grace—guilty, lost, ready to perish, unless God shall interpose to save. Only sinners have need of grace; only sinners can be saved by Christ; and among sinners, such only as feel and confess their guilt, and *therefore* come to him for pardon, for justification, and for a new spirit.

This is the main point in the chapter now before us. "The preaching of the cross," says the apostle, "is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved it is the power of God." The pride of men contemns God's method of salvation. "The Jews require a sign;" their superstitious trust in outward ordinances demands some new miracle which shall minister to their vanity as the chosen people of God. They are ready for a Christ who will achieve their national independence, and make their name great, as it was before Egypt and the Canaanites. The Grecks, given to the culture of taste and the pursuit of philosophy, "seek after wisdom;" demand a religion that adapts itself to their views of reason and

propriety. "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block," offending their pride, touching their national honor, the very opposite of all their opinions and hopes: "and to the Greeks, foolishness;" for their system of rationalism, of the development of the understanding in the worship of nature, disdains the idea of a reforming power in the blood of one crucified as a malefactor; "yet to them which are called," who are made to feel their guilt and their need, this same Christ crucified is "*the power of God*," greater than all miracles, and "*the wisdom of God*," higher than all philosophy. And this humbling doctrine of the cross, is to the very intent that no flesh should glory in the presence of the Maker and Lord of all. This brings us back to the very issue named at the outset—the conflict in this matter of personal religion between the *pride* of man and the *grace* of God.

The Scriptures ascribe the salvation of men, in all its steps, entirely to the grace of God; and therefore they ascribe to him also the glory. The text enumerates the several benefits which Christ brings to us, and traces these all to "the gift of God." If we analyze these, we must see that, *at every point of our moral necessity, Christ is the adequate provision; that he comes to us as the expression of God's grace; and that through the same grace we are led to accept him unto salvation.* "Of him [*i. e.*, of the will of God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God [*i. e.*, by the appointment of God] is made to us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. The text declares,

1. That Christ becomes to believers Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.

2. That Christ thus becomes the source of all spiritual good, by the appointment of God the Father.

3. That it is solely through the grace of God, that we

individually enter into such a relation with Christ, as to secure for ourselves these great blessings.

1. Christ becomes to us *wisdom*. This wisdom is the knowledge of divine things, not as mere objects of thought or of theoretical knowledge, but through an inward perception, in which the heart goes along with the reason, making the knowledge at once spiritual and practical. This is always presented in the Scriptures as wisdom in its highest form. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," is one of the most frequent proverbs of the Old Testament. It means something more than that one begins to act wisely, when he begins to fear the Lord; for as it reads in the margin of Prov. i. 7: "The fear of the Lord is the principal part of knowledge," and hence the exhortation to apply the heart to wisdom, "and seek for her as silver: for the Lord giveth wisdom." Again we read, "the fear of the Lord is the *instruction* of wisdom;" *i. e.*, devout obedience to God conducts the soul to the highest wisdom; the obedience of the heart disciplines the mind in heavenly knowledge, upon the principle stated by Christ: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." In the New Testament this same "wisdom" is set forth as the completest form of knowledge. Christ is said to have "abounded toward us in all wisdom, having made known to us the *mystery* of his will," *i. e.*, the wisdom which Christ imparts, is a knowledge of the will of God, of those divine mysteries which natural reason does not grasp or fathom. The word is even applied to such revelations of the divine will as were made to the apostles, under the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This wisdom is knowledge in its highest form. Solomon, who with respect to a practical judgment of what is right, and good, and true, was the wisest of men, and who attained to such a knowledge of natural science, of po

litical economy, and of practical affairs, as made him the wonder of his age; whose observations on the winds and rains, the rivers and oceans, the heavenly bodies, plants, trees, fruits, animals, minerals, metals, all the phenomena of nature, and also upon human society and government, make the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the store-house of ancient knowledge—this same wise man declares that mere natural wisdom, or wisdom applied to natural things, is labor, weariness, and vanity; but that to fear God and keep his commandments is the sum of all knowledge and duty. This knowledge of God, associated with love and obedience, was vainly sought after by the ancient philosophy. To Greeks, who were continually seeking after wisdom, and who made philosophy their boast, Paul says: "The world by wisdom knew not God;"—all the researches of your boasted philosophy, all the theories of your wisest men, have failed to comprehend aright the being or the character of God. Reason might have discovered these; but through the love of the creature, man turned aside from the knowledge of God, and so "God made foolish the wisdom of this world."

Now Christ becomes to us "wisdom," the source of true spiritual knowledge, in these two respects: He makes known to us God, as he was never before manifested to men; and by his enlightening and sanctifying Spirit, within our hearts, giving to reason a right direction, he leads us to a perception or discernment of this knowledge which we should not otherwise attain. There are two essential conditions of sight: one is light, the other a sound eye. The perfection of the eye does not avail in pitch darkness; the pureness of the light does not enable a blind man to see. Now Christ is at once the light of the mind, and the eye of the soul. He is the pure transparent medium or atmosphere through which we may

behold God just as he is; and when once received by a rational and cordial faith, he so purges our intellect and conscience of the blinding humors that sin had gathered about them, that we can bear this light, and see without distortion or suppression.

It will not increase our knowledge of mere natural things, to embrace Christ and be taught of him; except as, by a general invigoration of the powers, this may enable one to cast off errors even in natural science. The Brahmin, for example, who has always regarded the created universe as a huge animal or machine animated by the Deity, when he comes to the knowledge of God in Christ, gains a view of the personality of God, and of his active, superintending providence, which at once annihilates all his natural science, and puts him in the way of sound physical knowledge. And so the savage who learns Christ, unlearns all his superstitions about the elements of nature, the lightning, the storm, the flood, diseases and death, and comes to a wiser view of natural phenomena. In matters of decency and taste also, that which mere contact with civilization could not rectify or improve, is at once reformed when the perception of moral beauty is awakened in the soul by receiving Christ.

But all this is merely incidental to that higher wisdom which Christ imparts in the right spiritual knowledge of God. It will not teach you mathematics or metaphysics; it will not enable you to calculate the distances of the stars, or the depths of the sea; it will not unravel for you the mysteries of the air, in relation to winds, rains, climates, and diseases; it will not resolve for you the elements of nature or the phenomena of mind, simply to believe in Christ: you will not become wise in the meaning of the universities, nor in the esteem of the men of this world;—but that knowledge

which is before and beyond all other—which is the first, and ever the greatest want of a thinking soul, and which is also the consummation of all knowledge, in time and in eternity—the knowledge of God in the grandeur of his attributes, in the mystery of His triune nature revealed in Christ, in the glory of His holiness, in the excellency of His love, in His paternal goodness, in His redeeming mercy, in His pledged and everlasting grace; *this* is the wisdom that Christ brings to the humblest of his disciples. What matters it to have climbed the heights of mountains, and compassed the earth, if there be no heights of glory for the soul beyond? What matters it to have sounded the sea, and have gathered its treasures, if the soul shall never stand upon the sea of glass before the throne? What matters it to have visited upon beams of light the outmost planet, and have measured the stars, if for the disembodied spirit there shall be no wings of love to bear it to a celestial home? What matters it to have analyzed the constitution of the soul, if the great wants of that soul, as a spiritual and immortal existence, shall be for ever unsatisfied? The wisdom that Christ brings, that Christ is, is the wisdom that man ever needs, but had never found. It is the wisdom of God; the being, the attributes, the character, the works, the government, the purposes, and, above all, the emotions, the desires, and the promises of God toward man, all truly and fully displayed; and while it is no newly created faculty within the soul, it *is* that soul itself in all its faculties, quickened and purified to behold, to honor, to love, and to enjoy God as He is. This is that wisdom which is the life of the soul. "For this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent."

But in order that this knowledge of God may be made profitable to a sinful creature, he needs to be

restored to that moral rectitude from which he has fallen. And for this, also, Christ is ready, Christ is all-sufficient: He is made to us *righteousness*. Had Jesus of Nazareth been only a greater and wiser Plato, announcing perfect truth, imparting a perfect knowlege of God, in the naked form of a system of theology and morality, it would have been as if he had brought to our view another and brighter sun, spotless in its glory, but far off and inapproachable. Man, remaining as he is in character, does not desire more light. He loves darkness rather than light. He cares not to *know the truth* unless he is willing to *do his duty*. He cares not to approach God until he is disposed to be reconciled, and is assured that he can be reconciled. And he is averse to having God brought near to him as a *light*, unless He comes also with *love*. If he would so much as look towards that glory which dazzles the seraphim, he must be made sure of his standing-place, and covered by a shield from its beams, which else might consume him. Christ is that foundation, Christ is that cover. When he brings God nigh in his holiness, he plants the sinner upon the foundation of his own obedience to the law, and covers him with His perfect righteousness. He is our justification; not our apologist, not our partisan, not attempting to shield us in the wrong; but He is the ground or reason of our justification before the law; so that we, who have no righteousness of our own, can be regarded as righteous in Him who loved and died. He comes before the law as our Advocate, not to invent excuses or to plead extenuation; not to devise expedients for our escape; but he begins the case by confessing the guilt of his client, and then offers himself for the penalty.

But to stop here would be to leave the great end unaccomplished. Of what benefit would it be to *us* to

save us from legal penalty and leave us in sin? For sin, by its very nature, works penalty in the soul; degrades its faculties; defiles its affections; corrupts its will; poisons its imagination; perverts its judgment; alienates it from goodness and truth; unfits it for companionship with the pure and holy, and for the society of God. Of what benefit is it to a drunkard, if one should pay a fine to release him from the legal penalty of drunkenness, and then send him back to the dram shop? Of what advantage would it be to the kingdom of God, to the social condition of this world, to the moral interests of the universe, to remit the penalty against transgressors, and give them a renewed license to sin? Nay, what evil would there not be in such an implied permission of sin on the part of the lawgiver and judge? If Christ's death procured an indiscriminate justification of sinners as such, it would prove the greatest possible calamity.

But he is made to us *sanctification*. By his own pure and perfect example, by the energizing and reforming power of truth, by the indwelling power and virtue of his Spirit, he renews and transforms us into his own likeness, into the image of God.

Possibly, in another sense also, Christ may be said to become our sanctification. The law strictly can recognize only a perfect and an absolute holiness; but under grace, while the law is still the one *standard* of duty, a *governing disposition* towards holiness, the honest, earnest, supreme, and constant endeavor of the soul to be holy, is recognized for Christ's sake as distinguishing the Christian, though imperfect, from the willful transgressor.

And this justification and sanctification are with a view to a *final redemption* from all the evils of sin. The act of justification is at once complete, for every soul that accepts Christ. "There is now no condemna-

tion to them that are in Christ Jesus—who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The work of sanctification, however, is yet incomplete. We are still in the flesh; still accessible to temptation; still exposed to the great adversary; still beset with infirmities; still in danger of falling; still burdened with besetting sin. All our illumination as to the divine character, our quickened perception of the holiness of God, in its beauty and glory, would but aggravate our sense of imperfection and unworthiness, could we not look forward to a complete emancipation from evil. If our existence were to continue one prolonged and uncertain warfare with sin in ourselves, the glory of the atonement would fail to be realized. But Christ has achieved our redemption from all the power and consequences of sin. "Whom he called, them he also justified and whom he justified, them he also *glorified*." "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." The day of redemption is spoken of in Scripture as a period when the purchased possession of the Lord Jesus, his living and sanctified church, shall be delivered in soul and in body, from all evil; when sin and death shall have no more power; when the atoning grace of Christ shall be consummated in the actual and eternal deliverance of an innumerable multitude from all the evils of the fall and its curse, from all trace and consequence of sin.

2. We have now summed up the blessings which the text ascribes to the mediation of Christ. It further teaches us, that Christ is made the author of all spiritual good *by appointment of God the Father.* Christ did not rise up as a mere man of loftier genius and better

nature, to instruct and elevate the race. He was *sent* into the world to save men from their sins; sent by God the Maker, the Lawgiver, the Lord of all; sent by the offended Sovereign whose law had been dishonored, and whose authority rejected; sent by the compassionate and forgiving Father of mankind, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. This feature of the plan of redemption should never be forgotten. The death of Christ was not a sacrifice to appease wrath, but to proclaim mercy. He came from God. And it is OF GOD—of his self-originated grace, of his divine companion and mercy, of Him from beginning to end, that Christ is made our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption. He sent Jesus to enlighten us; he accepts his perfect righteousness as our shield; he sends through him the sanctifying Spirit; he promises in Christ eternal life to all that believe. This wondrous plan in its inception, its successive steps, its glorious consummation, is all divine.

3. But there is a third idea in the text, which is essential to the completeness of the subject; viz.: *That it is solely through the grace of God, that we individually enter into such relations with Christ as secure for ourselves these blessings purchased by his blood.* "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." To be *in* Christ is an essential condition of sharing the blessings of his grace; in him by the personal participation of his grace; in him by that living faith which makes us branches of the vine; in him by a sympathy of feeling toward sin and toward God, wrought in us by his grace; in him as the dearest object of our love, and the centre of our hopes. Only to those who are thus in Christ, does he become the source of good which the text describes. And they come to be in Christ through the effectual grace of God—grace not only in provid-

ing a Saviour, but grace in leading them to that Saviour. This grace does not regenerate the soul in a passive state. Men are not converted in their sleep, nor with dormant faculties. If Christ becomes wisdom to any mind, it is because that mind exercises its thought upon Christ and his truth—opens itself to his teaching, yields to his truth. If Christ, becomes righteousness to any soul, it is because that soul by its own act of faith, by looking to him and trusting in him, accepts his atonement as its plea for pardon. If Christ becomes sanctification to any soul, it is because that soul, feeling its guilt and need, seeks by his grace to conquer sin, strives to become holy, and to purify itself by obeying the truth through the Spirit. And if Christ shall hereafter be the redemption of any soul, it will be because that soul has kept its confidence in him steadfast to the end. God deals with men as thinking, acting, free, intelligent, responsible beings; there is no grace that destroys man's moral nature in the very act of renewing it to holiness. But while man's activity *must* be put forth in acts of thought and resolve, in faith and love and obedience, or Christ will never avail him, it is yet true that no man really comes to Christ, "except the Father draw him." The Holy Spirit brings truth vividly before the mind, and thus brings it to see itself, and to see God in the light of Christ's teaching concerning both; the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us, and thus makes Christ our wisdom; the Holy Spirit incites us to the act of faith; we must put forth that act, but He moves us towards it; the Holy Spirit by the truth kindles within us desires after holiness, and inciting us to prayer and watchfulness, promotes our sanctification; and therefore, though Christ can be literally nothing to us, without our *own act* of reflection, of repentance, of faith, of love, yet since we

will put forth no proper act toward him except as moved by grace, we do owe to that grace our salvation from first to last. If we are in Christ, if we know him, if we partake of his righteousness and his Spirit, if we have hope of his redemption,—it is all from God, who hath had mercy upon us.

1. Our subject makes it manifest that *Christ should be the one substance of gospel preaching.* Is the Bible given to convey to us the knowledge of God? But Christ is that wisdom. Is the Bible given to bring us near to God? But Christ is the way of righteousness and peace. Is the Bible given to make us holy? But Christ is our sanctification. Is the Bible given to fit us for heaven? But Christ is our redemption. Therefore "we preach Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God." To preach a gospel without Christ, is to preach another gospel, "which yet is not another," since it can bring no grace nor salvation to a guilty world. But *this* gospel has a perpetual power. How long could Mr. Everett attract the same audience with his eloquent delineation of Washington? But the character and work of Christ, however humbly set forth, will move men till the end of time. Washington delivered his country, but cannot save our souls. Christ alone is our righteousness and our redemption.

2. Christians should make the most of Christ in *this* life, as well as hope in Him for all the future. Ready enough are we, brethren, to accept of Christ as our righteousness, and to look to his death as the ground of our pardon and justification before God; ready enough to look forward to our final redemption through him; to accept Christ throughout upon the external and legal side of his work, as a deliverer from condemnation, from penalty, and finally from all evil. In one word, we are ready enough to be saved by Christ, and to give

to him all the glory for that. But are we as ready to accept his teachings—to make him our wisdom; as ready and eager to be sanctified as we are to be saved? Is Christ made to us *wisdom*—do we seek daily light in him and come by him to a higher, closer knowledge of God? Is Christ made to us *sanctification?* Do we become consciously like him—holy in thought and purpose, in desire and act? Can we divide the work of Christ, and divorce one part from another—take the justification and the final redemption, but omit the humble, patient, earnest seeking of knowledge and of holiness in him? Would you know whether you are in Christ? Look not only to your catechism, but to your life; not only to your faith in doctrine, but to faith in action.

3. Christ is *all that any soul can need*, but *what every soul must have*, that would see life. Sum up these four particulars of our text: the right knowledge of God; a right standing or acceptance with God; holiness, or a character like God; deliverance from all evil, and a share in the blessedness of God. Is there anything more that any soul can want in the eternity of its being? Has Paul found anything more than these, in all the ages of his rejoicing before the throne? Can eternity bring anything more than the knowledge, the peace, the holiness, the blessedness of God, to dwell within the soul? And yet, perhaps you are seeking to *add* something to this work of Christ;—by some merit of your own to piece out the purchase of his blood! Vain, foolish man! Throw away thyself and come humbly, gratefully to the foot of the cross. Or is there anything in this brief but all-comprehensive summary of blessings that you can do without? Can you do without the knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ? Then you must know Him out of Christ, as "a consuming fire." Can you

do without a pardon from the Saviour you have offended, the Judge to whose bar you hasten? Can you do without holiness? Can you do without redemption? And would you set up your wisdom against the wisdom of God; your pride against his grace? "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long suffering—not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." My hearers, you cannot enter the heaven where Christ is, but in the way which Christ has opened through his cross.

IX.

TEARS AT THE JUDGMENT.

BY JOHN M. KREBS, D.D.,

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There shall be weeping.—Matt. xxii. 13.

The blessedness of the heavenly state is set forth to our comprehension by imagery that may be readily appreciated, in its resemblance to the course and constitution of things around us. For the poor, there are laid up exhaustless riches; for the joyless, there are rivers of pleasures; for the outcast, there is a home in the house of many mansions.

Among the most attractive representations of the happiness of Heaven, is this—that there the Lord shall wipe away all tears from the faces of His people—that there shall be no more weeping. This representation is fitted to interest every heart. This world is a vale of tears. Every habitation of man, every personal history, furnishes scenes that serve, by contrast, to illustrate and enhance the happiness and glory of that world, from which all sorrow and sighing flee away, and where the days of mourning are ended.

But this is not to be the portion of all, without reference to their moral character and fitness. The Scriptures appropriate and restrict it to one certain description of persons. These are the just made perfect; the heirs of

the righteousness of faith; those who once, indeed, were children of wrath, even as others, but who are washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

It is distinctly intimated to us that all who fail of this character, shall also fail to inherit this blessedness. For them there is nothing but outlawry. On the day of final trial, they shall be condemned to "destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The punishment they suffer is variously described. It is to be burned with "everlasting fire;" it is to be gnawed by the "undying worm;" it is to endure the bitter pains of "eternal death." This is the portion of all the workers of iniquity, who refuse to part with their sins; who, for the sake of the darling right hand of transgression and the right eye of lust, are to be cast into hell-fire.* In various addresses of Christ, the punishment of the lost is spoken of in connection with "*weeping*," *and* "*wailing*," *and* "*gnashing of teeth.*"† This is the portion of the disappointed and disinherited children of the Kingdom, when they see aliens adopted, and themselves are cast out into the outer darkness;—of the faithless, turbulent, and unprofitable servants of Christ;—of the tares;—and of all those who have no interest in Christ, unwashed, unsanctified, unjustified, unarrayed in His righteousness, as they are represented in the parable of the guest who had not put on the wedding-garment. This is an intelligible part of their suffering; it gives us an idea of its bitterness. It may properly be taken as an indication of the manner in which they are affected, who suffer under the sentence of exclusion from the joy of Heaven. It is in this

* Mark ix. 43.

† Compare Matt. viii. 12; xxiv. 51; xxv. 30; xiii. 42, 50; Luke xiii 26–28.

way—in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth—that they vent their sorrow and despair. While this expression of their grief is to be eternal as the everlasting fire, it may be supposed to commence at the very bar of God. The wrath is in the soul of the sinner. He comes to that bar in the speechlessness of conscious guilt, and with a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." With consternation, he hears his doom. He turns away upon his dreary road to the prison-house. But, like a criminal convicted in the dock, he sinks under the verdict and the sentence, and bursts forth, at once, in the lamenting expressions of his bitter and terrible distress.

We may regard this "gnashing of the teeth," as descriptive of the intense agony of despair. It is expressive of hate and blasphemy, like theirs who were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God, and repented not to give him glory, and gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.* There is something akin to fiendishness, in these utterances of hatred, and defiance, and blasphemy, as the wicked gnash their teeth in the damnation of Hell.

"Wailing" is lamentation with wringing of hands and outcry. It bursts forth upon the public ear. And it has about it, something of the aspect of vulgar woe.

These manifestations of grief are obvious and dreadful. Yet, perhaps, these images may not affect us so forcibly as the "weeping" which is to be the expression of distress in that day. There is an aspect of refinement, something unobtrusive in "weeping," as contrasted with "wailing and gnashing of teeth." It is a more

* Rev. xvi. 9–11.

silent, subdued grief; but deep and bitter indeed; the manifestation of overwhelming and hopeless sorrow.

To this, let us turn our thoughts especially.

We have often felt emotions which struggled in sighings or flowed forth from the eye in scalding tears. How are we affected with sympathies that move our pity and compassion for the woes of our fellow-creatures; —for a child in its first endurance of orphanage, lamenting for its lost mother; for a woman in the desolation of widowhood, or suffering from tyranny and oppression; and perhaps most of all, for the strong man, when we saw him bowed down, prostrated, overwhelmed, by some calamity that crushed his heart with a single blow. We saw the grief of these objects of our pity, and shared it, almost in spite of ourselves. How, too, have we felt, when the calamity was all our own! The cup was filled with gall and wormwood, and the pressure of our sorrow was so great that it unnerved, unmanned us. Who of us is not familiar with the causes of weeping; rather, who is not familiar with weeping itself? And who knows not, too, from his own experience, how effective and grateful is the relief of sorrow, felt in copious shedding tears? There is even a luxury in them. And there is the weeping of love and penitence, when the full heart of contrition looks on Christ whom we have pierced, and feels the joy of pardoned sin; like the weeping woman in the house of Simon, who showered her tears upon the feet of Jesus, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; or like Peter, when he had denied his Lord, and under the melting look which both rebuked and humbled and forgave him too, he went out and wept bitterly.

But it is not of such weeping that our text speaks. These may all be gracious tears; the weeping that endures for a night, to be followed by the joy of the morn-

ing. But that which is described in the premonition before us is the weeping that lasts forever. It has its springs in a despairing heart; its stream bursts forth from a bosom rent with anguish, and flows on unending. Unlike the bitter fountains of Marah, no cries prevail for the procuring of that healing branch which the Lord showed unto Moses, which, when it was cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.* It is unavailing as Esau's when he sold his birthright. It may be with subdued sorrow, that would hide itself in solitude; but the desolate soul turns away from the face of the Judge, and would turn away from the face of the crowd, and search out for itself some secluded spot, if such there be in the pit of woe, where it may nourish its hopeless grief with never ceasing tears. This is the portion of their cup, who suffer banishment in that day.

What is there, in the circumstances of their condemnation, to produce such hopeless and bitter sorrow? I remark,

I. THERE IS THE CERTAIN CONSCIOUSNESS OF COMPLETE DISAPPOINTMENT AND UTTER LOSS.

Perhaps the sufferers never thought of being excluded from Heaven, as a real or possible event. Deceiving themselves with vain hopes, willfully ignorant of the truth of God, unmindful of the wrath to come, and with no effort to flee from it, they felt safe, and made sure of future blessedness.

But this delusion can comfort them no longer. Their hopes of escaping are swept away like the spider's web, and they are confounded by their own experience of the realities of death and eternal judgment.

Let us sketch some of the characters that are doomed to this woeful disappointment.

* Exod. xv. 25.

The *ribald infidel*, who defied the truth of Heaven, and made God a liar; who, in the face of all evidence, trampled Jesus under foot as a vile impostor, and insulted the blood of the Covenant as a disgusting pool from the shambles; he, even he now comes to find that Lamb of God upon the throne—that despised cross-bearer raised up to judge the world. And whither shall he turn to hide himself from that eye which darts its angry fires * upon the cowering malignant who once dared to take up that blasphemous watch-word of unbelieving hate, "*crush the wretch!*"

The *worker of iniquity*, who defied the law of God, as an unreasonable restraint, and contemned the warning of retribution, as the dream of fanaticism, is now confronted with that law, and made to feel that the wrath of God *is* revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of men. He feels that utterly unfit to dwell with God, he has no other portion than that which has been prepared for the fearful and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, who have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.†

The *worldling*, who gave himself up to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; who deemed this barren earth sufficient bliss, and pursued all his pleasure amid its pomps and gaieties, and planned and provided for them, as if this were the true aim of life—and who perchance expected that after such a frivolous and sensual existence here, he would enter upon some corresponding enjoyment hereafter; or it may be, never thought of the future, and was content to think that death is an eternal sleep; he too, now finds him-

* Rev. vi. 17. † Rev. xxi. 8.

self alive and conscious—but it is in hell, in the midst of torment;—and while vainly imploring that even some poor Lazarus, whom here he despised, may be sent with but one drop of water to cool his tongue—that tongue so dainty once and delicate, now parched with torment of ever burning lust,—he is met with the rebuke, that in his life-time he received his good things, and as he sought no other, he is justly left to his proper and chosen reward. Torn away from the world to which he bound himself, his idol and his portion lost, his gods gone, his riches fled, his joys worn out, his honors faded —there is none poor enough to do him homage—and what has he left, but the devouring flame and the unavailing sorrow?

The man who indulged a *hope of mercy, such as the gospel never published*—who would not repent—who deemed it useless to believe in Christ and follow him; who, it may be, had read the gospel backward, and thought that the blood of the cross by its mere overflow had quenched the fires of perdition; and so, insulted that atonement which he plead as the sanction of his resolved depravity, and dishonored and degraded Christ, by making him the minister of sin; or who, at all events, comforted himself with the thought that God would be merciful at the last, to all men without exception; he too finds out the guilt and ruin of this enormous mistake. He sees, now, but all too late, when the face of God is set against him, that he is a holy God, and that while the offended Sovereign does indeed show mercy, he shows it in a peculiar way, wherein his justice blends with grace, and displays his manifold wisdom. He sees that God pardons sinners, only for Christ's sake, and only as they are reconciled to God, by *coming* to Him through the cross, and by repenting of their sins. He finds now, as he witnesses the administration of

justice and mercy at these grand assizes, that he has all along been insulting that mercy which he professed to trust—rejecting that Saviour whose grace he had disparaged with his own opprobrious praise, and trampling under foot that blood of the Covenant, which Jesus shed to save his people from their sins; and conscious of his own unpardoned, unrenewed condition, he departs to realize the truth and righteousness of that sentence—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

The *self-righteous man*, who spurned the charges of his sinfulness, and indignantly disclaimed his need of a Saviour; who expected to be *justified* on the ground of his own merit, his just and blameless life; what views has *he* now, of sin, and of his own goodness, and of the way of salvation? He had heard from Paul the confession, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;" and from David, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad;" and from holy Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But, though Paul and David, and Job preached to him from their own experience, he would not receive their testimony, nor admit the conviction of his sin. But, now the law shines upon his conscience and his heart, with a brightness that reveals his corruptions, and speaks forth its holy demands with a voice like that which made Israel at the foot of Sinai tremble and entreat that they might hear it no more. He looks upon those robes of self-righteousness which he had folded around him so complacently, and lo! they are as filthy rags. The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it, and the covering is too narrow to wrap himself in it. His loathsome nakedness

cannot escape his own eye, much less that eye of the Judge which is as a flame of fire. And who is the Judge? It is that same Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness, who now requites the injuries with which human pride disparaged his atoning work; and who, impartial and just, as he is merciful and gracious, convicts and condemns the *sinner* who would have plead his own goodness as his justification for rejecting Christ and his Cross. He would have nothing to do with Christ's salvation, and Christ has nothing to do with him. He is taken at his own choice. The law he trusted denounces him; but convinced too late, and finding no place for repentance though he seek it carefully with tears, he knows what it is to be "accursed from that Christ" whose vengeance he had braved till death, whose anathema he was not afraid to hazard.

Sore, too, will be the disappointment of the man *whose hope of heaven was fed upon the sins of God's people.* What wretched offal is this to feed a soul upon. He has fancied or suspected ill, where no ill was; sometimes invented it, and nourished himself upon the slaughter of their good name; misjudged their real offences and imperfections; or, to put the matter at the worst, beheld their insincerities and hypocrisies; and feeding his heart with these, was content to make no effort to attain to piety and holiness for himself. But now he finds that the false professor, with whose trangressions he had thought to bridge his own way over the yawning gulf of hell, is damned; the blind follower of blind leaders falls into the same abyss; and both the stumbling-block, and he that stumbled over it, are doomed alike, and perish together in the same fire. He that would be wise must be wise for himself, and he that will be foolish must bear it himself; and while the righteous scarcely are saved, he who has eaten up their sins as bread, has been feed-

ing on the wind, and regaling himself with corruption; and while his deceived heart was thus turning him aside, it was to his own loss, and he cannot deliver his soul.

And the *formalist in religion* who trusted to a bare profession, to Shibboleths and rites and sacraments, but never set himself to purify his heart from its iniquity, nor to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,—though but now he urged with such confidence, "Hast thou not taught in our streets, and have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence?"—is fain at last to understand that the servant who knew his master's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, and that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and to his appeal for entrance into the joy of the Lord, there comes this withering reply, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." *

And also, he *who met the urgent call of the gospel with indolent procrastination;* he now realizes how fallacious were the hopes and resolutions with which he postponed repentance, till some more convenient season. *That season never came.* While he revolved the purpose of future conversion, and meanwhile continued impenitent, adding iniquity unto iniquity, his delays did not retard the coming ruin. Judgment did not linger; damnation did not slumber. Cut short in his career, he was driven away in the midst of his wickedness; and he awoke from his delusive dream of protracted reformation, only to find that he had been laying up wrath against the day of wrath, and provoking till it was exhausted, the abused forbearance and patience of his justly offended Creator.

And there is yet another: *the awakened sinner*, who

* Luke xiii. 26–28; Matthew vii. 22, 23.

with anxious concern, inquired what he must do to be saved? How near he seemed to the kingdom of God. Hope and fear were awakened for him, and hope and fear struggled together in his own breast. But for all this conflict, there was no issue in true peace. He hesitated, he distrusted, he did not close with Christ, he turned back. He remained fearful and unbelieving. Like that interesting young man who drew back from Christ—sorrowfully enough, indeed—because of his too great love of worldly wealth; like Lot's wife, already on her way from Sodom, yet pausing to look back regretting;—he looked back too fondly upon the attractions of that world from which he should have escaped as for his life. And while he lingered, he lost his spiritual concern, and the storm came and swept him away. He sees now the evil result. The slighted calls, the resisted influences, the strivings of God's Spirit that he so madly quenched, all rise before him; and now that he is cast into the outer darkness, he endures once more those terrors of the Lord which, had he improved them when he felt them in his lifetime, would have led him to salvation. He feels them now, renewed with tenfold power, but they are associated with no call to repentance, no offer of pardon, no hope of mercy. They are renewed indeed, and renewed for ever—however often he had laid them asleep, however long he fought against them, till they departed; and as he persisted in trifling with the day of grace in which they visited him in mercy, so now they have returned upon him, but it is only to produce in his soul the overwhelming conviction that the mercies of God are clean gone from him forever.

Sad and sorrowful must be the disappointment of all these on that day, and sore the weeping for their melancholy loss. Sometimes perhaps they had feared how it might go with them. But their solicitude was

transitory and inefficient. And on the whole, they thought and hoped they would inherit heaven.

But now, they are thrust out. They are conscious of their fate. It has *come*. They have an overwhelming conviction that there *is* a heaven of holiness and joy, but in it is no place prepared for them. They have an overwheming conviction that there is indeed a deep and dreadful hell, and it is prepared for their eternal abode. They cannot doubt it now. The gates of the new Jerusalem are closed against them, and all its glorious light withdrawn; the company of the redeemed are gone in; the songs of melody die in the ear of the lost, and they are shut out to despair. The lurid flame of the pit can be descried; the surges of the burning lake roar in their ears, and they hear the wail of perdition. They are hurried onward with the crowd of the condemned whither the yawning gates remain wide open only till they enter in,—then to be shut with dreadful clang, by that arm which holds the keys of hell and of death. And they shall go no more out.

Now, *for the first time*, they vividly realize the *certain loss* of hope. The conviction is irresistible. They see, they feel that the ruin of the soul has come upon them; and no illusion can ever more deceive them with fond expectation; no gracious overtures, so often spurned, be offered for ever more; no effort of fancy can destroy the painful consciousness that the ruin is real—the loss complete—the doom final.—"And there shall be weeping."

II. THIS FEARFUL SENSE OF LOSS SHALL BE AGGRAVATED BY THE THOUGHT OF THE MISERABLE COMPENSATION FOR THE SAKE OF WHICH THEY INCURRED IT.

What has sin cost? It should be very precious, when it is held at such a tremendous price. But how is it valued now by those who have paid so dear for it? Hear them, while they review their bargain and estimate their pur-

chase: "For the sake of those fleeting pleasures which so often left a sting behind; for that vain bauble, and those empty honors that were nothing more solid than the breath of men; for those heaps of gold that corroded in my hand, and fled away on wings; for the fear of a little self-denial; to please a friend, who cannot help me now; to preserve my indolent ease; for pride and ungodliness; for a portion in that world which is burning up before my eyes; *for these!* I was willing to forego all serious thought, and encounter the risk of this dreadful perdition! For *these*, I have lost yonder shining heavens, those golden streets, those rivers of pleasures, those angelic companions, and those melodious songs and welcome plaudits, those seats of bliss, that everlasting rest! Yes; for these miserable and destructive vanities, I have lost my soul, and lost my God and Saviour! To avoid tears of penitence and tribulations for Christ's sake in the earth, I have purchased eternal indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; and the tears I am now shedding—ah! they shall flow forever from my weeping eyes! I have got my portion—I have obtained my reward—my damnation is come!" Ah! how bitter will it be to reflect, "This is the portion I have chosen for myself!"

"So the struck eagle stretched upon the plain,
No more thro' rolling clouds to soar again,
Views his own feather on the fatal dart,
And winged the shaft that quivers in his heart.
Keen are his pangs—but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel;
While the same plumage that had warmed his nest,
Drinks the last life-drop from his bleeding breast."

III. To THESE CONSIDERATIONS MAY WELL BE ADDED, THAT CAUSE OF SORROW WHICH WILL ARISE FROM THE SEPARATIONS WHICH WILL THEN TAKE PLACE.

I do not design to enlarge upon this thought. I would only remind you how friends and families are divided by death, and how painful is the separation of those whose lives are bound up in each other. But there are already divisions of moral character, and a difference between the most intimate associates, as they are either righteous or wicked, which portend an eternal difference of destiny, an everlasting separation, wide as Heaven and Hell. Alas! these divisions exist between the dearest relations: between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brother and sister. They are apparent in their different course of life; they disclose themselves in the sanctuary and at the communion-table. Oh! my friends, is this to be so forever? Are these separations ominous of those which will take place between *you* at the last day? Certain it is that the saint and the sinner will be parted from each other then. And shall *you* be parted then? Shall these parents, and companions, and children, now dear to each other, here, be awarded, some of them to life eternal, and some of them to everlasting woe? And then, when a wide and impassable gulf is to be fixed between them, will there not be lamentation and weeping before the judgment seat of Christ?

Imagine, if you can, the sorrow of that most conscious hour. Have you never felt how appalling a conviction is produced by the experience of some unforeseen, or even by some dreaded, calamity? When it came, it came suddenly. Though you felt it a thousand times in the anticipations of your fear, yet when it came in reality, the blow was overwhelming. Was it, when you stood by the couch of that beloved one, fearing, yet watching, for the last breath which was too surely at hand? And yet, striving to cherish hope against hope, not even realizing, though you knew, that recovery was

impossible? And then came the moment when that gasping ceased, the heaving form lay still, and the seal of death was stamped upon the brow. You stood stupefied; then came the sense of blank desolation; the blood rushed back upon your heart, appalled and frozen by the overwhelming certainty. It was present in every reflection. It was renewed in the night-watches. And it was this certainty, of consciousness and experience, that sharpened your pain—this was the acuteness of your grief, the reflection that cut its way to your inmost heart and soul—"I shall see my beloved no more!" and, you wept—oh, how you wept!—What, then, must be the feeling of that solemn hour, when men shall realize the gains and losses which your whole life-time has accumulated for eternity; when death and judgment shall wind up the account of probation, and award to the speechless, conscious, reprobate that portion his iniquity has earned, that certainty of everlasting ruin which he can never more deny, nor shake off from his despairing heart.

"It shall be even as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite."*

Even from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, you may obtain some impression of the feelings which will accompany the certainty of your losses, at that last day. Perhaps, you have waked up in the night, under the intense emotion of some affecting dream, and found yourself weeping. Some great disaster had happened in your sleeping fancy, some irretrievable calamity, some bitter, hopeless grief, some peril you could not escape; and it so pressed upon your

* Isaiah xxix. 8.

heart that it unsealed the fountains of tender sorrow, and you waked up in tears.* How unspeakable was your relief when you became conscious that it was all a dream.—But if you could feel such bitterness of distress under the mere fancy of your sleeping hours, what must it be to start up, not to exchange the weeping of a dreaming hour for the sober certainty of waking bliss, but from the dreams of sin and the sleep of death, to meet your God in judgment, and to exchange all your delusions and unrealities for the waking certainty of eternal damnation!

Yea, on the other hand, it has sometimes happened to you, when you had some real distress, that you gained a temporary forgetfulness in sleep; and your dreams were visited with visions of the loved ones you had lost. But the joy was too great to last, too ecstatic to allow you to repose. You open your eyes, and with quick and agonizing consciousness, the pang shoots instant through your heart, and you are held in the grasp of the sad reality. You would persuade yourself that *it* is but a dream. But, yon vacant couch—that empty chair—those unused implements of work or pastime—the silence of the deserted chamber—and the piercing recollections of the hour when you laid the loved one in the grave—these will not let you believe it. And, again, your woe bursts forth as if your very heart would break with agony.

Well might one, from the midst of such experiences as these, send forward the serious thought, to mingle with the scenes of the last day, and in their contemplation to anticipate something of your possible experiences there: "What if, after all, I should stand at that bar condemned? What, if in that hour I must relinquish all hope, and turn away, bidding an eternal farewell to

* Such was the origin of this discourse.

all I loved, or thought to enjoy—to part from lover and friend—to part from the saints in light and the angelic company—to part from God and Heaven, from Jesus and his salvation—and to go away weeping from the presence of that Saviour who wipes away all tears from his people's faces." Oh! bitter, bitter thought! Painful, but salutary now, while, as yet, the reality is a future thing, and we are still the prisoners of hope.

Let us weep now, that we may not weep then. Not for our earthly sorrows, but for our sins. Not with the sorrow of the world that worketh death, but with that godly repentance which is unto life—those tears of contrition which are shed at the cross of our dying and atoning Lord.* Fall at his feet, and plead his compassion; and his smile shall light your face with gladness. Go to him, now, like that weeping sinner who approached him in the house of Simon at Capernaum, when with throbbing, bursting heart, she pressed her lips to his feet, bedewed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Holy men would have repelled her, as too vile to touch his sacred person. Did he repel her? Did he repel her?——

—— "In the sky, after tempest, as shineth the bow;
In the glance of the sun-beam, as melteth the snow;
He looked on that lost one, her sins were forgiven,
And Mary went forth in the beauty of Heaven."

* Zech. xii. 10.

X.

TRUE REPENTANCE.

BY WILLIAM HAGUE, D.D.,

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Repentance from dead works.—Hebrews vi. 1.

This phrase forms a part of a remarkable paragraph which was intended by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews as a brief summary of those "first truths" which were boldly commended to the attention of all men, by the apostolic preachers of Christianity. We have here a lucid statement of six elementary principles which were always proclaimed by Christ's first disciples, both to Jews and Pagans, in such a way as to show that they constitute the very alphabet of Christian teaching. Mark well, I pray you, this primitive form of the Apostle's creed; this brief enunciation of those first truths which agitated nations, broke the moral slumbers of a guilty world, and introduced a new religious era, which is yet advancing to its glorious consummation. Not a minute is required for their repetition; they lay no heavy burden upon the memory. "Repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms (or an open profession), laying on of hands (or the gifts of the Spirit), resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;" these were the themes which the first heralds of our religion proclaimed with all authority, with great simplicity of speech, and with power from on high. Whosoever received these truths with a

cordial welcome, and proved his sincerity by an obedient life, was hailed as a Christian, a child of God, and an heir of heaven; but whosoever heard and rejected them, ratified anew every sin that he had committed, and deliberately incurred the fearful doom that overhangs the path of the transgressor.

It is my desire, friends and hearers, to fix your thoughts upon the first of these first truths which were sounded forth of old in the ministry of the Apostles. The efficient progress of religion in every age, all the real and permanent triumphs of the gospel, have been achieved by the simple force of these "first truths," brought into contact with the minds and hearts of the people. You well know that it was so in those days when the greatest moral revolution which human history records was produced by the ministry of Galilean fishermen. So it was, also, at the period of the great Reformation, when Europe was convulsed by the words of a poor Saxon monk; when the masses of the people thronged around Luther and his coadjutors, as if they had been angels from heaven, commissioned to reveal the mind of God to men. So it was, too, in the age of Whitefield and Wesley, when a paralyzing religious Formalism had overspread the whole of England, and when, to a great extent, its deadly spell was broken by the simple preaching of the gospel. Had the chief agents of that spiritual renovation, had Whitefield and Wesley sprung from the ranks of Evangelical Dissenters, or from the ranks of converted Romanists, they might have been tempted to expend their force upon the themes of ecclesiastical controversy; but, as if for the very purpose of raising up an order of Evangelists who should devote all their energies to the promulgation of the first truths of religion among the English people, these men were called forth from the bosom of the Established Church

itself. And so, moreover, in later times, within the sphere of our own observation, those revivals of religion that have been to many communities "as life from the dead," have been commenced, and carried forward, by the inculcation of these "first truths," which the plainest man may apprehend, which send their appeals to every conscience, and rouse the soul of every individual to immediate action, in view of its relation, as an immortal being, to God and eternity.

But, then, alas! how formidable are the obstacles that resist the power of these "first truths," and render the mind unaccessible to their approach! From early youth the terms that are used to express them have become familiar to the ears of all that are educated in a Christian community, and the habit of hearing them, without any consideration of their meaning, issues in a fatal insensibility to the appeals which they are ever sounding forth. They fall upon the ears of those who constitute what is called a regular congregation, or assembly of worshippers, without arresting attention; and the force of habit is constantly strengthening those moods of mind which are adverse to the clear apprehension of the great ideas which these terms signify. Thus they are proclaimed and heard without the desired effect. They awaken no concern; they call forth no opposition. They are the elements of a dead creed. They do not startle or even interest those who admit them to be "the true sayings of God." If I could be permitted to stand in a market-place of Rome or Vienna, and preach to the gathered throng repentance towards God as a "first truth" of Christianity, showing that Penance is nothing, that Mass is nothing, that priestly absolution cannot save the soul, but that Christ, the Great High Priest, dispenses pardon to all who, with true repentance, come unto him, O, how deeply agitated would be

the whole community, like a broad sea stirred by the passing tempest! The announcement would be met with demonstrations of wrath by some, and hailed as tidings of great joy by others. And yet this gospel is needed here as urgently as it is needed there. All need repentance, because all have sinned. A sinful soul can never be saved without it. Will every one here to-day seriously consider this "first truth" in relation to himself? Will every one be willing to commune with his own heart, and admit in converse with himself this solemn truth: "I must exercise true repentance in the sight of God, or be the victim of sin for ever." Surely it is so, friendly hearer! for you are an immortal being, and yet a sinner; SIN is in your nature, reigning with all the force of a physical law, and you must be delivered from its fatal power, or suffer the inevitable effects of sin throughout the career of an endless existence.

What, then, let us ask, with all simplicity of mind, and with all earnestness of intention—what is the nature of that change which the gospel demands as being essentially requisite to your eternal happiness? You perceive that the chief term used to designate it is *repentance*. What, then, is repentance? In answering this question, I observe:

1. That the simple meaning of that word, which was so familiar to the lips of the first preachers of the gospel, is "a change of mind." Whensoever the term *metanoia*, which was usually employed by the apostles to designate this change, fell upon the ear of a Greek, it was always understood to denote some kind of conversion. His idea of the nature of the change intended would be naturally modified by the connection in which the word occurred; but whensoever it was used by a *Christian* teacher, in connection with the startling narrative of his Master's life, death, and resurrection, it always denoted such a

change in one's habits of thought, feeling, and conduct, as constituted a necessary preparation for the heartfelt reception of Christ as the true Teacher, the only Saviour, and the rightful Sovereign of the soul.

A Pagan Greek, therefore, no more than a Pharisaic Jew, would ever have been led honestly to ask of a Christian preacher, "What am I to repent of?" or, "What am I to be changed unto?" The claims of the Messiah jarred so strongly against his cherished notions of religion, they shook so thoroughly the whole fabric of his hopes while they struck at its very foundations, that he would feel himself brought directly to an issue, and would be constrained to say, "I must resist this new doctrine as the chimera of fanaticism, or else I must yield to it as the very word of the eternal God himself!"

Hence, you will observe that the word repentance in the text is joined to a peculiar phrase; for the language here used is, "repentance *from dead works*." All men whom the first heralds of the gospel addressed were depending upon one or another class of "works," or doings, or observances, as furnishing grounds of mental repose, or grounds of trust for happiness hereafter. The Pharisaic Jew was a High Churchman (strictly speaking), regarding acceptance with God as his birthright, guaranteed by the covenants of Abraham, and resolved to preserve it by a faithful keeping of the Mosaic law. The Pagan Greek had his routine of temple services, his "works of piety," as they were called, on account of which he expected the blessing of the heavenly powers. The philosophers paid outward respect to the prevailing religious customs, but trusted to a life of virtue, according to the definitions of their several schools. All men, of almost every rank and condition, were trusting to some prescribed set of *works* as being sufficient to insure their spiritual welfare. What a shock was given, then,

to all these cherished hopes, when the gospel proclaimed that none of those works, so firmly trusted, had in them any vital principle of goodness that could render them acceptable to God! They could not atone for sin; they could not renovate the heart; they could not meet the demands of conscience; they were, therefore, "dead works," lifeless forms, alike unworthy of the regard of God or the confidence of man. Oh, how did priests and people rage and scoff against a gospel which required of them "a change of mind," involving not only a renunciation of their sins, but also an utter abjuration of all dependence on old and cherished grounds of trust like these!

And yet, friends and hearers, just such "a change of mind" the Gospel requires of us. For we, too, are "by nature" children of the world, and "children of wrath even as others." We, too, like Jews and Pagans who have lived before us, acting out our native character, do trust in works of one or another sort in order to insure divine acceptance. You may not be saying with the Pharisee in the temple, "I fast twice in the week—I give tithes of all that I possess;" and yet you may be pleading some other form of goodness, and be disposed to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not so bad as other men." But be assured, none of these works or forms of goodness meet in any degree the demands of the divine law unless they have sprung from one ruling principle of supreme love to God. And that principle of love, you know, has never reigned over the elements of your natural character, nor formed a part of your moral constitution. And if such a principle had been imparted to you in your early childhood you would recognize it as a gift of grace, would develop its power in a life of obedience, and would never be disposed to plead it as a ground of meritorious justification in

yourself. This change of mind, therefore, this moral renovation, is for every one of us a matter of urgent need, as really as it ever has been in the case of any human being that has lived since sin entered into the world. For, it is evident at a glance that if man be a fallen creature he can never have anything like a religion that is acceptable to God, without true repentance, inasmuch as repentance is necessarily the first form which love must take in the breast of a transgressor. It is clearly a universal truth, that wheresoever a heart has become alienated from an object that is entitled to its love, that heart can never know the joy of love again without sincere regret for its offence, without real REPENTANCE in view of that state of mind wherein its alienation hath originated.

2. Hence we are led to observe that the mental change here spoken of implies not merely a change of intellectual views, of opinions, or of purposes, but it implies also spontaneous sorrow on account of the nature and evil of those sinful DISPOSITIONS, which are the very elements of moral character and the masters of action. In the course of human life there are many thoughts that obtrude themselves upon one's mind, so as to awaken the emotion of grief; they come unbidden, they are unwelcome visitors, and the scenes of worldly gaiety cannot charm them away; but there is no idea which the mind can entertain that is capable of producing an emotion of sorrow more profound and more influential than the idea of an utter unfitness for the favor of God. When that thought is but faintly suggested, and flits within one's view as only a dim conjecture, it diffuses around the heart a cold and deadening gloom; but when it flashes through the depths of the soul with all the force of a realized conviction, the deepest springs of sorrow are unsealed, and there is no

sorrow like unto that sorrow. For the feeling of which we speak is not akin to that sullen sadness with which a proud and rebellious spirit yields to a harsh decree, nor to that keen remorse which often haunts the man who would fain forget his crimes; but it is a sentiment of ingenuous grief in view of one's moral disqualification for enjoying the manifested presence of God or the society of heaven. If I may illustrate it by means of an analogy suggested by secular history, it is a feeling akin to that which we can readily imagine would oppress the heart of a thoughtful man, if, like the King of Sicily, he should discover the worth of such a friendship as that which was exemplified in the lives of Damon and Pythias, and, at the same time, were conscious of his own utter unfitness to participate in its enjoyment. In that case, though he were master of a kingdom, how poor and forlorn would he be, and with what reason might he bemoan his miserable condition! He might pray, as Dionysius prayed Damon and Pythias, that he might be welcomed into a covenant of friendship; but then, unless his heart were filled with genial sympathies, unless he were conscious of the supremacy of that moral principle which is the real ground of mutual confidence, he could know nothing of friendship but the name, and all outward forms of welcome would be but a tantalizing mockery.

This momentous truth which I have just uttered, be it observed, was brought to view by Christ himself in his parable of the wedding-garment, wherein he pictures to our imagination the case of a man at a bridal feast without the suitable attire which the royal law required. Be assured, O friendly hearer, you and I are invited to participate in the joys and honors of a heavenly festival. But what is meant by that wedding garment in which each one of us must be attired in order to be welcomed

as guests of Heaven? I answer, in the language of Archer Butler, "The garments must, surely, from the very nature of the image, have been intended to signify something *public* and *visible*, in which each wearer harmonizes with all, and all with *the spirit of the peculiar scene* into which they are introduced, and to which the dress is appropriate. This festal garment of heaven, then, which each man must bring with him into the high presence of God, seems to be no other than that celestial temper which manifests itself by the infallible indications of a holy joy—that spiritual sympathy with the things of the spiritual world which exhibits itself in cordial, irrepressible demonstrations of the blessedness within; holy happiness, public and expressed; the 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' no longer a secret, timid, half-uttered delight, but sparkling in the eye, and fearless in the voice; the 'life' no longer '*hid* with Christ in God,' but 'apparent with him in glory.' I repeat it, inward spiritual happiness, developed by the presence of God and the consciousness of heaven, into visible *manifestation*, this is the 'wedding garment' which Christ beholds and approves in the saved." And oh! tell me, I pray you, is it possible that any one can apprehend the nature and worth of this qualification for the divine presence, and, at the same time, be conscious of an entire destitution of it, without one pang of real sorrow? By no means. You see at a glance that such a view of truth must produce ingenuous grief. You see that "repentance from dead works" is not merely a change of mind in relation to one's character and condition, but a sincere regret in view of the soul's fatal destitution of that which is essential to its welfare, connected with earnest longings for that renovation of character which God only can impart.

3. Hence let us proceed to observe, that this repen-

tance of which we speak is an inward moral force which produces a real transformation of life and conduct. For this "godly sorrow" of which we speak is not a vain and fruitless emotion. It does not expend itself in the tears, the moans, and the nervous excitements of a barren pietism. As the Scripture saith, "it worketh effectual reformation" not to be repented of." "Fruits meet for repentance," or a course of life and action congruous with this interior moral change, must surely follow this ingenuous sorrow under the light of a gospel which reveals the fullness of the divine mercy set forth by an all-sufficient atonement. You might conceive of such a state of feeling as repentance existing in a soul that knew nothing of a gospel; but that soul would sink more and more deeply into chilling despondency for the lack of motive-power—for the lack of all moral strength to resist temptation, and to realize its own ideas of the goodness or virtue which the divine law requires. But to the sorrowing heart the gospel reveals free pardon as the gift of God's munificence; reveals the Divine Spirit as waiting to impart strength; reveals the sympathetic love of angels as waiting to break forth into songs of welcome, that shall hail the converted soul's accession to the ranks of the redeemed ones. When the heart is touched with healthful grief for sin, these revelations reach its deepest springs of action, and awaken sentiments of love and gratitude which must express themselves in acts of joyous obedience. Deliverance, emancipation, redemption, freedom, salvation; these are the words which fall like heavenly music upon the listening ear, and furnish an adequate supply of motive-power to meet the soul's most urgent wants: "for what the law could not do in that it was weak," God, by the mission of His Son, has accomplished; so that "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk

not after the flesh but after the Spirit." The true object of life is now clearly seen; a longing to realize it is now deeply felt; and this great mental and moral change carries the witness with itself that the man is "born again;" that he is a "new creature," having been translated from the realm of darkness into light, from the kingdom of the "wicked one" into that "of God's dear Son."

And now, O friends, having called your attention to this "change of mind," which the early heralds of Christianity sounded forth as the "first truth," let me urge upon you the careful consideration of it, as being a matter of the greatest practical importance. It is one of those subjects which ought to be dismissed from the thoughts at once, as undeserving the least regard, or else it ought to be seriously entertained, in such a way as to command immediate and effective action. Why should a man allow a theme like this, in the form of a message from God, to mar his peace, to disturb his slumbers, or haunt his waking hours, without resolving to "look it fairly in the face," to dispose of its demand in a manner that shall be final, satisfactory to his heart and conscience, never "to be repented of?" O, be assured, when the soul is once really awake to its consideration, that fact becomes an era of personal history that must inevitably cast a cheering light or deadly gloom over all the future.

Consider, I pray you, the meaning and bearing of this statement. For such an awakening of the attention is, necessarily, a crisis of the inward life, and there is only one wise way of meeting it. A man should either convince himself that there is no such thing as a "law of sin" reigning in his moral constitution, that the elements of his natural character are all pure and good, so that he may safely, as the philosophical Transcendental-

ists say, "fall back on nature," let the reins of government play wantonly "on the neck of the divine animal," act freely out what there is within him, and brave the consequences fearlessly; or else he should confess that there really is a "law of sin" working in his soul as a fatal malady; and, while he deplores its power, should accept the only remedy that has been provided—the grace of Christ revealed to us by the Gospel. Unless you IGNORE the very idea of sin, you must come to this conclusion; for all who discern the reality of sin acknowledge that it has in itself a progressive and self-perpetuating power; that where it has its way in any rational being it must gain the supremacy, and that wheresoever it lives in any human heart, it reigneth unto death, "changing all down its course each thing to one with its immortal nature."

But, alas! we cannot so easily ignore the idea of sin, unless it be in some momentary fit of moral inebriation, for though the benumbing spell seem of long continuance, in due time it must be broken. You cannot entirely deaden your sensibilities to a perception of this fatal reality. The hour must come when the soul shall know and feel that its cherished tastes and passions, habits and aims, jar against the constitution of the moral universe. And then, wheresoever it may be, that whole universe will become to it a very HELL. All its memories and all its anticipations must then be elements of torture, preying upon its expanding capacities as consuming and eternal fires. For we need no Bible to teach us the solemn truth which one of the world's "own poets" has thus recorded:

"The mind that broods o'er guilty woes,
Is like to scorpion girt by fire;
The circle narrowing as it glows,
Till inly searched by thousand throes,

And maddening in its ire,
One and sole relief it knows;
The sting it nurtured for its foes,
Whose venom ne'er yet was vain,
Gives but one pang and cures all pain,
He darts into his desperate brain.
So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like scorpion girt by fire.
So writhes the mind remorse has riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed to heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death."

When Lord Byron thus pictured forth in flaming words the interior state of the finally impenitent, did not exalted genius then pay a tribute, though unconsciously, to the worth of the gospel, and sound forth a call unto all men to give ear to the voice of mercy, which, through the lips of Christ, speaks unto us from Heaven? Let not the warning be in vain, for every one of us must know the joy of true repentance, or be the victim of remorse forever.

XI.

SEEKING THE LORD SO AS TO FIND HIM.

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"Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you; And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart."—JER. xxix. 12, 13.

GENEROSITY ought always to be exercised with discretion. The bestowment of gifts without a proper discrimination becomes a wasteful prodigality, and an indiscriminate munificence to the *poor* will do more harm by encouraging indolence and pampering vice, than it will do good by relieving want. Hence, those who would bless the needy, are called upon to see to it that they incite to industry and encourage virtue, as well as relieve want, by their benefactions.

The economy of divine grace, in this respect, affords us a perfect example. Nothing can be more absolutely a gift than the favor of God, as vouchsafed to sinful men. And yet nothing is made to depend more clearly and certainly on human endeavor. Indeed, the divine favor makes a demand for effort of the most strenuous sort, just because it is a benefit of such immense moment. They that enter the difficult gate must strive, must agonize, to attain their end. An entrance into the heavenly city can be gained only by an effort, the earnestness of which is represented by the vigorous action of an army, when they take by storm a fortified town.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Our text is a prediction of the return of the visible people of God to a spiritual and happy state, after a captivity of seventy years. In the preceding context it is said, "Thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." In the Hebrew it is, as in the margin of your large Bibles, to give you an end and an expectation. That is, to give them an end of their captivity and troubles, and to create an expectation of a more happy state. Then the process is described, by which they shall be brought back to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings. "Then shall ye call upon me." But this is not all; you shall do it very earnestly: "And ye shall go and pray unto me." Even this is not all; you shall seek for the blessing in that diligent and persevering manner which is represented by searching for a lost article. "And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

There are two very distinct views of seeking, as applied to endeavors after spiritual good. They are characterized by the *objects* placed before the mind. You are sometimes exhorted to seek *religion*. And what is religion, in the sense in which the term is employed in this exhortation? It is a state of mind in which are exercised a sincere repentance towards God, and a cordial faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He that exercises these dispositions of heart, possesses religion. If these sentiments are in lively exercise, and exert a powerful influence over the subject of them, he possesses

much religion; if they are feeble, and exert little influence, he has little religion. If he has *not* yet repented of sin, and embraced Christ by faith, he is said to have no religion. Observe, then, that this mode of exhortation is addressed only to those who are destitute of true piety. The object placed before them is a certain state of mind, and this state of mind they are urged to seek for. Of course, they are asked to seek it because they have it not. They are called upon while continuing in a state of alienation from God, to do something, as a means of attaining to repentance and faith.

The other view of seeking, to which I adverted, places a totally different object before the mind, as the thing to be sought. That object is God; or, which is the same thing, a manifestation of the divine favor. Instead of making a right state of mind the object, and seeking for that right mental and spiritual state, by an endeavor in which there are no holy desires, you are called on to place God's favor before you as the object, and to seek it by the exercise of a sincere repentance and a genuine faith. Do you understand clearly this distinction? Let me state it briefly again. In the one case you are asked to seek repentance and faith by an endeavor in which there is, of course, no element of either repentance or faith. If you possessed these dispositions you would not need to seek them. In the other case you are to seek God, or the divine favor, by repenting of sin, and believing in Christ. I need scarcely say, that the latter is the view of the subject which prevails in the Scriptures. In our text, God says, "Then shall ye seek *me* and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

To draw your attention to the prevalent mode of representing this subject, in the sacred Scriptures, let me cite, briefly, several passages. David says, in his last advice to Solomon, "If thou seek the Lord he will be

found of thee." Of Hezekiah it is said, "That in every work that he began, and in the commandments to seek *his God*, he did it with all his heart. The Psalmist says, "Thou art my God, early will I seek *thee;*" and, in the Proverbs, God says, "They that seek *me* early shall find me." And Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, makes the following representation of God: "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek *him.*"

It is delightful to reflect, in this connection, that the favor of God is an object that may be obtained with more certainty than any other desirable end. Men may seek victory over their enemies, and prosecute their warfare with bravery and skill, and yet some slight incident, beyond their control, may turn the fortune of the day against them. They may enter the lists of fame, and, as few can obtain the distinction sought, they see the prize borne away from them by another. They may compete with their fellows for popular favor, and the caprice of the multitude may baffle their utmost skill. They may seek wealth with severe toil, and shrewd calculations, and cautious frugality, and yet the very elements may conspire against them to keep them in the vale of poverty.

In short, every temporal good is uncertain and transitory. But the favor of God is sure. "The battle is not (always) to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor favor to men of skill, nor riches to men of understanding, but time and chance happeneth to them all." How cheering to look away from the uncertainty that rests upon all earthly good, to "The city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God!" And, how delightful to know that the favor of the Lord is given, with infallible certainty, to all who properly seek it. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." "Seek (says our Saviour)

and ye shall find, ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that seeketh findeth, and he that asketh receiveth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

While, therefore, God has purposely clothed every other human interest with uncertainty, he has taken this highest possible benefit, his eternal favor, and placed it beyond the reach of time and chance. He has encouraged us to seek other objects, by a *probability* of success, proportioned to their value. To this, because it is of infinite value, he has given a positive certainty. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

But is it practicable to seek for this object? It is certainly possible to conceive that God's eternal favor may be secure to those that seek, and yet a man might be in such a state, as would render it perfectly unreasonable to ask him to seek it.

If you were to go to an untutored Hottentot, and exhort him to seek the favor of his Maker, without imparting to him any knowledge of the Gospel, it would be unreasonable for you to expect him to seek the divine favor. He would not understand the process, nor even comprehend the meaning of your exhortation.

But, have not men to whom the Gospel has come, any more power than such a one to seek effectually the Lord? I think they have. They understand what the object to be sought is. The promise of finding, you will observe, does not rest upon a peculiarly skillful mode of seeking. Nothing is required, except that you *really* seek. "Seek, and ye *shall find.*"

What is it to seek an object? It is trying sincerely to find it. Can you not then seek the divine favor? Can you not, at least, *try* to find it?

It is equally obvious that you may seek it with all

your heart. You can scarcely mistake the meaning of this language. When you render a favor to one, with genuine good will, you do it with all your heart. You invite a friend to participate in your hospitality, and cordially urge him to spend a season in your family. You do it with all your heart.

It is a practicable thing to seek God with the same sincerity. You may make all your arrangements for securing the time for giving a needful and uninterrupted attention to this great interest. It may be inconvenient to do so. But if your physician should satisfy you that a fatal disease was bearing you on rapidly to the grave, and that a total suspension of attention to secular affairs, and a voluntary confinement in your chamber for ninety days, were indispensable to your recovery, you would be able to make your arrangements to pursue such a course. So, you have it obviously in your power to arrest, as far as it may be desirable, your attention to secular affairs, and thus to secure the time for an unembarrassed and thorough consideration of this great interest—the attainment of the favor of God.

Equally obvious is it, that it is in your power to secure your attention to this one interest. You may command the proper books, obtain the proper counsellors, and cut off from yourself all diverting objects, and chain your mind up to this one great work, the securing of the divine favor.

This done, you may abandon, in purpose and in fact, every thing which you yourself judge to be wrong. In other words, you can listen to and obey the voice of conscience, and cordially, with all your heart, implore the mercy of God; and you may find abundant encouragement to such an effort in the saying of Christ, "Seek and ye shall find."

To confirm this view of the practicability of finding

the divine favor, let me call your attention, for one moment, to the history of such endeavors as found in the sacred Scriptures. The popular influence of the Bible depends very much upon the historical facts, and the real and supposed instances, by which every important principle is elucidated. Thus the uncertainty of worldly blessings, even to the best men, is set forth by the history of Job. The danger attending the highest and most desirable stations is portrayed in the career of Solomon. The deceitfulness of riches, and the danger of being satisfied with worldly possessions, are exhibited in the instance of the rich man, who said to his soul: "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years." But we have no historical facts, no instances, no supposed cases, to show that a man may seek after God with a sincere earnestness and fail to find him.

If we resort to observation and experience, the same view is confirmed. We have never seen a man seeking the favor of God as a paramount object of regard, and failing to find it. There are, it is true, not a few, who, under the influence of nervous depression, or extravagant expectations in respect to the manner in which God manifests his favor, are oppressed with gloomy apprehensions, and treading on the confines of religious despair or delirium. But I have never met with a case in which a man in good bodily health, with an equable flow of spirits, and a calm and settled purpose, gave the first place to the work of securing the favor of God, who did not within a reasonable time find grounds of comfortable assurance that his end was secured. Indeed, it would operate on my mind as a most fatal discouragement, if it were not so. It would have more power than all infidel objections put together, if it could be shown that men might become entirely teachable and

willing to do their best to find the divine favor, and yet that their success would, even then, be uncertain. If I could know that one poor sinner had listened to divine instruction for the express purpose of learning what he should do to be saved, and had aimed, with a cordial good will, to comply with those instructions, and his efforts were unavailing, I never could stand up again with courage and call men to come to their Saviour. I must be permitted to pledge his veracity, that however poor, and heavy-laden, and guilty they may be, if they will but come to him he will give them rest. I must be allowed to say, in the name of God, "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

But, if it be so manifestly practicable for men to find the divine favor, why do not men, in greater numbers, attain an end so desirable? It is certain that multitudes give their habitual attention to spiritual things without becoming devout Christians. They appear in the sanctuary. They treat with respect the things of God. They do more. They seem to seek spiritual benefits by a regular attention to the means of grace. Why do they not obtain them? There are two reasons, one or the other of which applies to the greater part of our more serious hearers. First, many do not seek the right object. Instead of seeking God directly; instead of coming to him with humble importunity, begging his favor, and casting themselves on his mercy, they seek self-purification as a preparative for coming to God. Now, as this self-purification never can be attained, nor commenced even, without the divine favor, no amount of earnestness can avail anything while thus misdirected.

I have represented to my mind this case, by supposing a person afflicted with an issue of blood, like the

poor woman who touched the hem of our Saviour's garment, and was healed. Suppose yourself in such a case. Bloody discharges are issuing from the fatal wound, and defiling your person, and causing your life silently to ebb away. There stands by your side a friend who has power to heal you by a touch. He makes it an indispensable condition, however, that you shall take hold of his garment, in token of confidence. You wish to be healed. You make earnest effort, but it is improperly directed. You are not gazing at the physician, and pressing through difficulty, striving with outstretched hand to touch the hem of his garment. On the contrary, you are gazing upon the fatal wound, and, by various ablutions and changes of apparel, endeavoring to give yourself the decent appearance of a person who is not thus afflicted with a loathsome disease. You are not seeking the favor of your physician, but endeavoring to purify yourself, while the source of defilement still exists, in all its power.

So, many a sinner is occupied with the work of self-purification, and labors in vain. "The leprosy lies deep within," and he never will find spiritual health and peace till he listens, with an obedient temper, to the call, "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Others, again, who admit that they cannot purify themselves, have placed a wrong object before their minds by seeking another kind of preparation for seeking God. They confess that they entertain not the least hope of purifying their own hearts, but they fancy that they must attain to a certain degree of seriousness, and reach a state in which they shall secure clear and consistent views, as a preparative to seeking God. I have represented to myself this species of endeavor, by fancying that one of these little children has been walking

upon the upper side of the ceiling of this house. He has stept upon the ventilator, in the centre, and it has broken with his weight. He hangs suspended by clinging, with one hand, to a frail lath. To ascend, and recover himself, is impossible. To fall, by his own weight, would be fatal. His father provides for receiving him safely, if he will cast himself off at his word. But he is afraid, and distrusts his father. He is shown that he cannot recover himself. He admits it. He has placed himself in that position by his own folly. He admits this, and allows that he has nothing to depend on but his father's kindness. We all urge him to relax his hold, and to fall, at once, into his father's arms. He is not ready. He endeavors to place himself in a position in which he may fall gracefully, or in which it will be less mortifying to have it appear that he voluntarily yields to such a call, and that, too, after he had once, openly and boastingly, declared that he would carry himself safely through with his exploit.

Now, it is true, that as long as he cherishes this self-will he cannot relax his grasp, and fall into the arms of safety. But will you say that he cannot let go, while he employs much greater efforts to maintain his position?

Such is the condition of many a sinner, who admits that he cannot render himself deserving of the divine favor. He is endeavoring gradually to prepare himself. He tries to place himself in a position from which he may, with less mortification, and difficulty, yield himself to his Saviour. Yet the outstretched hands of mercy are beneath him. His Saviour calls him to relax his grasp, and sink into his arms. Instead, however, of looking to *him*, and seeking repose, with the beloved disciple, on the bosom of Christ, he still persists in looking to *himself*, and in endeavoring to change his own position. He does not find the divine favor, for the

obvious reason that *that* is not the object which he seeks.

If such fail, can there be any doubt as to the reason why those who are neglectful of the whole subject do not find God?

We may, it is true, raise the inquiry why so many of those who attend upon the public worship of God, and listen to the gospel, neglect to seek and obtain the divine favor.

This question may be answered in one word. They do not attend to the subject. That is to say, they do not fully consider those great, and solemn truths which so deeply concern them.

No one can think of the law of God, and of himself, as being a subject of the government of God, and remain unaffected. If he dwells upon it, he will perceive that the precept of the law is exceeding broad; that it demands of him that he shall be constantly governed by a supreme love to his Maker, and a disinterested and impartial regard to the interests of all mankind. He will perceive that the penalty of the law dooms the transgressor to eternal death, and that he, himself, is exposed to this awful curse. He will view himself as every moment exposed to be cut down, and placed forever beyond the reach of mercy. Looking down into the pit of the lost, and thinking of their companionship, their guilt, their extreme torment, and their despair, and of the greatness, and the instant character of his jeopardy of all this evil, he cannot avoid looking about, with anxious eyes, for a place of refuge.

So, if he will reflect on the mediation and sacrifice of Christ, and see at what a price his pardon was bought, he cannot but be moved by it. Why, you could not witness the scourging of the most inconsiderable of your fellow citizens, and see the blood trickling from beneath

the lash, and hear his groans, and know that he endured it from a voluntary connection with you, and through your fault, while he himself was innocent; you could not witness such a spectacle without the deepest, and most effective impressions being made upon your heart.

How then can you dwell upon the condescension, the suffering, the dying agonies of the innocent Jesus, and consider the scene till you appreciate it as a reality without being moved by it? You cannot do it. I know human nature is stubborn, and obdurate. That men have a wonderful power of steeling their hearts against the appeals of truth. But the gospel is stronger than man, and the only way to avoid the influence of that gospel, and to prevent himself from being subdued by it, is by casting it out of the mind by grieving the Holy Spirit, and refusing to look up to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

The subject suggests the most urgent motives both of encouragement and alarm, to induce you to seek the favor of God.

There is great danger, my unconverted friend, that you never will be savingly affected by the gospel. You can easily mistake your object. Instead of seeking God you may seek self-purification. The attainment looks like something so praiseworthy, that you are extremely liable to continue in a fatal delusion.

By a perversion of the conscience, you may say I am trying to be good. Certainly, you may say, no one can object to that. To confess your sins, to acknowledge your helplessness, and beg for mercy, is humiliating. You are reluctant. You ask, how can you object to my endeavoring to be good? I will tell you how. God requires you first of all to come to him and implore his mercy through Christ. The purification of your nature can commence in no other way. While you esteem

that Saviour "as a root out of a dry ground," you reject God's appointed method of restoration to his favor. No pretext of seeking to be good can justify your resisting the very first claim of the gospel.

You may wash yourself with the utmost assiduity, and you will be filthy still. The leprosy and defilement are too deep to be touched except by him who can say, "be thou clean," and that nature which he created shall hear his voice and obey.

You may endeavor to place yourself in a more favorable position for falling into the arms of divine mercy.

It cannot be done. Guilt, deep ill desert, and imminent danger are the preparatives. You have these. You may as well confess it first as last. You are a poor, miserable, helpless, guilty sinner. Your efforts to prepare yourself for relaxing your grasp upon the world, upon self-will, are nothing but a tenacious clinging to them. You need no preparation to let go, and sink into the embrace of a merciful Redeemer. On the contrary, you need to do that as a preparation for every acceptable attempt to obey and please God.

And what other encouragement can you need than the declaration of our text, "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart?"

Yes, you may find God; you may secure his eternal favor. You may do it, not merely after seeking him long and unsuccessfully. You may find him now, if you will now search for him with all your heart.

Fix it in your mind, then, that this is your first object. Go from this sanctuary to your retirement, and kneeling before the Lord, say to him: "Thou knowest all things. Thou art the searcher of hearts, and thou knowest, O Lord, that laying aside every other interest as inferior, I now come to thee, searching for thee with all my heart.

"I have tried self-purification and failed. The outward cleansing does not touch the deep fountain of my personal vileness. I have waited to become ready, and have only departed farther from thee. My preparations for seeking thee have only been a form of resisting thy claims. Thou hast called me first of all to seek thee. To thee, then, I come—to thee, who hast never spurned a sincere soul from thy throne of grace.

"Thy word and thy instituted means of grace have taught me. Thy Holy Spirit has convinced me of sin. The uplifted bleeding Lamb of God has appealed to my sensibilities. That bruised and dying Redeemer has presented me the true and only remedy. Help me by thy grace to gaze upon him as the bitten Israelite turned his glazed eye (while the deadly poison was raging within) to the symbol of thy mercy. Arrest, by thy power, the work of death in this ruined, helpless nature. Hast thou not bidden me thus to seek thee? Help me, O God, help me by thy grace, for I search for thee with all my heart."

Go thus to God, and you shall find his eternal favor. His promise cannot fail. "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

XII.

THE WAR WHICH KNOWS NO EXEMPTS, AND GIVES NO QUARTER.

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And there is no discharge in that war.—Eccles. viii. 8.

It has been a growing tendency of our times to narrow the range both of combatants and of prize and plunder in warfare, thus economizing its drafts alike on property and on life. In ancient days, all the inhabitants of an invaded land—the infant, smiling out of its cradle into the face of the armed stranger, the mother, the grandsire, and the bed-ridden sufferer, no less than the man of war found wielding spear and sword, were liable to be indiscriminately butchered by the enemy. Not only the public property, in the ownership of the hostile government or sovereign, but all the private domicils and possessions of the most quiet citizens, became the plunder of a conqueror; and were treated as the forfeited prey which victory might snatch out of the hands of the vanquished. Now—save in a general bombardment or siege, where exceptions and distinctions cannot well be drawn, but where all must bear indiscriminate harm—it is desired to separate the mass of the nation from the volleys of death hurled upon the army, their select and caparisoned defenders. Now, too, public law,

more and more, seems disposed, at least in Christian nations, both upon the land and upon the sea, to exempt from the range of its confiscations the property of those not actually combating—the home and the estate of the private citizen.

Yet, how terrible, with all these softenings of its grimness, and spite of all these abatements, is War, even in our own more favored age. Think, of its carnage not only, but of the bereaved homes where the dead are long missed and bitterly mourned. Think of the trade, study, and business broken up; the wealth squandered; the maimed in limb, and the broken in health, who lost, in its exposures and campaigns, a strength and a wholeness which were never to return; of the trodden harvest field and the burned village, and the land dispeopled and desolate. Think of the profligacy, lawlessness, riot, and profanity, that walk in the train of Battle, and that linger long after the return of Peace. Think of the alarms, and wanderings, and severances, inflicted upon the families which found their homes to lie in the track of Invasion; and who were scattered like a brood of frightened partridges from the hovering of the hawk—to hide themselves where they could and as they best might. And thus dwelt upon in its details, war, even in its lightest and most harmless shape, is no small evil. But, once recall the past, and gather back all the old aggravations of war. Make all property liable to confiscation, and every age and either sex the common prey of massacre. And suppose such a war let loose upon some community whom modern civilization and long Peace had made careless and defenceless, destitute of arms, and unapt to use them, if possessed. How horrible would be the rush of Blood, and Rapine, and Fire, over a people and a land thus grown unused to the conflict, and standing like ripe grain in thickest swath to

meet the keen scythe of the terrible mower Death, as it took its widest swing. The land would be like Eden before the invader, and like the burning cities of the plain behind his fiery march. You would be reminded of the old boast of the barbarian chief, that the sod dinted by the hoof of his steed never grew green again.

But, from the ravages made by the assailant, look to the sacrifices imposed by the defence. Yet, ordinarily, in the marshalling of soldiers to guard their country against the invader, it has been customary to make exceptions in behalf of large classes. Those of the gentler sex, and all of tender age, and those, too, who were in advanced life, and with whom infirmities grew whilst strength fast waned, were mercifully passed over by the requirements. The conscription did not take them. And so, also, those not reaching a certain stature. And often, too, those of a competent age and size and vigor, who could, however, hire a substitute, were discharged themselves of the service, by bearing the expenses of this delegate, who enlisted and bled in their room. Or, again, if a soldier had already served a certain number of years in the field, he was released from further bearing of arms. The Mosaic law was especially indulgent in the exemptions of this kind that it allowed.* The man who had built a house, but not yet dedicated it, was discharged, even out of the ranks in which he was about to march away; and so he, too, who had betrothed a wife but had not yet married her. And, on the verge of an engagement, the Hebrew captain was to summon every man "fearful and faint of heart" in the host, to leave, and taking his discreditable discharge, to go his way. We know well how strong, amid our own

* Deut. xx. 5–8.

busy and thrifty community, is the tendency of men to avail themselves of every legal semblance of a discharge from onerous public duty, or even from their equitable share of the just common burden:—how service in the militia mustering, or in the jury-box, or witness-stand, is evaded, and the assessor and tax-gather shunned:—and how urgently a discharge is pleaded for, whether justly or unjustly. And these may furnish familiar illustrations of the readiness with which many, did war burst forth, would seek excuse from serving in the ranks. To be drafted as a recruit would by some be resisted on countless grounds: to be made in person, or to have one's home and property become the target against which an enemy's line should point their musketry, or should throw up their works and plant their parks of artillery, would be regarded by many as a sacrifice to be evaded most earnestly and persistently.

There is a war, however, where all must enlist and bear arms. None are exempt from its conscriptions. Save the two lonely cases of Enoch and Elijah, the world has yet seen no instance of a discharge. There is a great fortress and line of siege confronting every homestead, and commanding every group of our people—a line whose pointed musketry we are, perforce, sooner or later, all of us to face—and into the very mouth of whose death-dealing batteries we are steadily marching. Sabbath by Sabbath—day by day—hour by hour—moment by moment, with each heaving of the lungs and with each winking of the eye-lash—the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the thoughtless and the gloomy, the ignorant and the scholarly,—are walking up, in one inevitable procession, with the intermingled tramp of Manhood's heavy foot, and the patter of Childhood's footfall,—into the flaming range of these terrible bastions. "THERE IS NO DISCHARGE IN THIS WAR." You fall here:

I fall there. The rattling hail of death is among us at this instant. Sure as the daylight now shines, so sure is it that we must all bide this summoning, and must brook this conflict. I might go from bench to bench in the Sunday-school, and from pew to pew here, and without the least hazard of mistake say to every one:—"And you, too, must die." "IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE"—appointed by an All-knowing One, of whom there is no cheating,—an Omnipresent One, whom there is no shunning,—an Almighty One, whom there is no resisting. No skill, no craft, no force, no tears, no outcries, no affection can baffle the stroke. No heaps of golden ore, no ranges of widest empire can purchase exemption from the confiscations of death. To day, the capitalist stalks the exchange, wielding his own large fortune, and it may be that of many another household than his own; to-day the king rules his myriads of subjects, and all the cabinets and courts watch with solicitude the turns of his policy. The war of Death comes on; and by to-morrow the grim invader and destroyer has handed over the fortune of the millionaire to greedy heirs, and the keys of the bank to other office-holders; and has tossed the diadem and sceptre of a dead Cæsar, perchance, into an infant's feeble and quivering hands. None pillages like Death, with such sweeping forfeitures; his victims "carry nothing away." None hunts like Death, never losing his scent or missing his game. None aims like Death, with a shaft that always hits. Is there no flying—no bribing—no pleading—no reasoning—no treating with the enemy? No. There is no discharge in this war. Count, if you can, the myriads of "the mountains of his prey," since the days of the Fall. Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord. But Death is a mightier, for he earthed Nimrod himself, and every other conqueror since. He has heaped the soil with

pyramids of corpses, and manured our globe with the dust of its human tenantry. No weapons come amiss to his fighting. He drowns, burns, strangles, stabs, hacks, poisons, and blights; all modes are alike to him. He spares nor sex, nor age, nor rank. "DEATH HAS PASSED UPON ALL."

Thus have we seen the meaning of the terrible metaphor of our text, or that war which ravages everywhere, and confiscates all possessions, and exempts none of woman born, feeding, with its prey, a grave which is never satisfied. May the Spirit of God set home this most familiar, yet the most forgotten of truths.

II. Let us, in the second place, now count over some of the DISCHARGES men think to find, but which have failed, and always will fail them in the trial.

1. *Youth, Hope, and Love* are no discharge. If they were, would our journals, and weekly obituaries record so many deaths of little children—among them, how often, the only child of doting parents, now left inconsolable? Has not the sinking steamship on the ocean, the burning, or exploding steamer upon our inland waters, carried down in its wreck many a husband for whom home looked long, but unavailingly? Has there not gone down daughter, sister, or wife, whose names would have been the last to be selected, in their own circle, as probable victims of the destroyer? You can so ill be spared at home. Parents lean on you; young associates, and friends hail you as the very centre and bond of their gaieties. Hopes, the most fond and bright, are bound up in your life. Or you are a parent, and, if you are taken, who would provide for, and who instruct, and defend your little prattling babes? Surely you are not to be torn from a sphere where you are so greatly needed? Look around the circle of your friends that

now wear mourning. There are among them widows who mourn for husbands, who were even thus needed, and even thus beloved; but the wife lost the household bond and stay. Death wrenched them away. There are, among these bereaved ones, children already motherless, ere some of them were yet of the age to know the vastness of their own terrible loss. There are those who will tell you that, a week before the stroke fell, they had not a thought of the beloved friend, or child, being in any danger. There are those who will, with sobs, explain how their darling boy never looked so well, or bore himself so winningly, as the very week that was to stretch his waxen corpse in the undertaker's narrow casing. You will hear of the holiday jaunt that was fixed for the very month which Providence had marked for the funeral escort. Cheeks as blooming, and eyes as bright as those of the youngest here, paled and closed with a few days of sickness. Youth, Hope, and Love are, then, no discharge.

2. Nor are *fears of death* any discharge from it. A man may be reluctant to talk or think of the gloomy topic; but he is no safer by forgetting, and shunning it. In any ordinary war, the Hebrew, by God's law, upon owning his timidity, might be exempt from service; but it was not so in this great conflict. The fearful, and the fearless must march here, side by side. You may be like those Eastern heathen princes, before whom it is a rudeness even to speak of dying, or like the old Romans who, shy of naming the dread fact of death, spoke of departed friends as those who "*had lived;*" but the pale king does not refrain from calling upon those who would ignore his existence and decline his acquaintance. You may, like Hobbes, or like Bentham, dread to be left alone, even in the dark, or, like the first of them talk of dying, as a leap to be taken into the dark; but

all these vague and sad apprehensions cannot postpone the plunge. You shudder and you shrink, and perchance in very horror you shriek; but called, you must go.

3. Nor are *remedies, and skill, and science* a competent discharge. These may, under God's blessing, lengthen out life, and may restore and guard health. But walk the costliest shop of the apothecary, and ask its owner's history. You will find that, spite of all his medicaments, he has father and mother, and, perhaps also, the wife of his youth, and darling children, lying in the grave. And he himself owns a burial-plot in some cemetery where he expects to be gathered one day to his fathers. Visit some hospital renowned for the perfection of its arrangements, and the fullness of its anatomical museum, and the talent and fame of its medical staff; and you learn, on inquiry, that yon marble bust is the image of some great physician whose face death has long since covered; that the founder of yon cabinet, and the planner of these admirable and effective arrangements for the relief of human pain, and some of those eminent names who once walked and taught here as the most illustrious proficients in the science of healing, have yet all, in their turn, succumbed to the destroyer. Skill may delay, but cannot evade the summons.

4. Nor is it a discharge that you have *many unfinished plans.* John Bunyan said, with a rugged energy of expression, that it would be well if living men were more used to take their own dying day and to make it their company keeper. But the plans of most men are notoriously shaped without reference to any such companion and counsellor. These plans stretch far ahead. Some of them may be vicious schemes of wrong-doing, and of reckless self-indulgence. Others of these uncom-

pleted purposes may be honorable and noble. They may concern your own improvement, and the increase of the comfort and happiness of your family. They may be lofty purposes of earnest research and successful study. They may be long-pondered and sagacious projects for the rapid accumulation of a competency; or dazzling day-dreams of richest affluence, speedily to be won, and splendidly to be enjoyed. They may be designs of philanthropy, and of merciful ministering to the well-being of your land, or of your race. You may be full of great and kindly schemes for the Church and the Mission field. Or, as yet you may personally have neglected religion; but, you intend to make Christ, as you think, full amends before you die. You mean to be one day—much sooner, perhaps, than your religious friends suspect—a convert; and, when converted, you will be such a Christian—so decided, and fearless, and untiring, of such consistency, and devoutness, and winning gentleness. Would we dissuade you from such a purpose? God forbid. But we would, as we love your souls, dissuade you, and warn you from thus neglecting present duty, and from forgetting present danger, and present sin, in the formation of such schemes for the future. These self-absolutions, pronounced in foresight of a purposed and future repentance, are damning confessions as to the conscious, deliberate, and obdurate character of your present offences. These fair, and, as you suppose, godly schemes are no discharge when the bony hand of Death rattles upon your door. This man dies and leaves an unfinished ship on the stocks; that man, an ungathered harvest in his fields. Here is a book which the author's death left all incomplete. And we have read, in an ancient volume, of a wise man—a thrifty, and, for all that we know, a very moral and estimable man—who was all busied about such schemes

He meant to enlarge his barns, and store there his harvest; and then—and then, would he not take his ease? The book goes on to say, that, out of heaven, he was told that night to die, and called a "*fool*," when summoned into eternity. Is the book true? It was made by the Being whose servant and liege vassal death himself is,—the Being who was never yet known to utter an "*idle word*." There can be no mistake in the case. That was the precise message from heaven. Ah! should you receive such an one,—or I? The schemes —frugal, wise and comfortable schemes as they were—it seems were yet no discharge for the body from death and for the soul from hell.

5. And here we reach another awful step. *The want of your having yet made any preparation of the soul for death;* the utter want of Christ's grace; the want of the new birth; the want of a good hope for the dying hour, though it be the most tremendous of deficiencies, is yet no discharge whatever in the war. If death takes you away as you are, and without Christ, your soul is lost beyond a doubt. Will God let the destroyer hurry you away thus unprepared? Why not, if God's book explicitly warns you that "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness?" Why not, if our text most plainly says, rounding out the words we first chose, with this addition: "Neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it?" Why not borne away unprepared, if the fault, as to want of preparation, is all your own? You have been familiar with the gospel; you have lived in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths, and have had your personal warnings from Providence and your own secret strivings of the Holy Ghost. When this great, dread war, to which you were born, and of which every cemetery, every tolling bell, every funeral notice, every passing hearse, every coffin seen by you through the

panes of the undertaker's windows, every ache in your own person, and every ailment, warned you—this war, so long foreknown and so terribly fatal—calls you, the reluctant and the truant, to take yourself the front place—what show of reason is there in your pleading want of preparation as a discharge? For what was life given but to know God? And knowing God, as in Christ he most graciously revealed himself to be known by you, you would have been prepared. Why have you forborne to know your Saviour? why refused to acknowledge his gracious claims, and been ashamed to wear his blessed livery? He shrunk not from ignominy, or any pain or any loss, that he might reach and rescue you. Why have you withholden the heart that he asked? and why clung to the sins and the idols that he denounced? and why rejected the love, and peace, and the heaven that he proffered freely—proffered sincerely—proffered often—and is proffering you even now;—but as yet has proffered to you all in vain?

It is, indeed a terrible lot, from a land of light and revivals, to go down, unprepared and unforgiven, to an eternal sorrow. The death of one dying without Christ is a fearful sight to behold; and the departure of such a spirit on quitting the body is a journey that Fancy may well shudder to follow, and faint as she attempts to depict it. But how many have so died. And if death comes for us thus found unready, we may tremble and recoil; but the terrible sacrifice, and the hopeless doom that are before us as we go, are to the grim, pale King of Terrors no discharge.

"Not ready!" he may exclaim; "and after all this time—after twenty years, thirty years, fifty years, or even seventy years, not ready? When would you be? Come with me, then, as you are. If you have loitered I, the messenger of a holy law and a just God, am no

loiterer: here is my warrant, and it demands you, body and soul."

Men dread sickness and pain; they shrink from dependence, and poverty, and slavery: it seems terrible to them to be the thralls of idiocy or madness. But what are all these forms of worldly want and of mortal woe compared with the condition of him who must go to death, and is all unprepared for the exchange of worlds? His sins, all unsubdued, are neither repented of nor forgiven. On him no regenerating change has passed; and no sanctification has made him meet for heaven. The justification in the blood of the atonement, and in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, in which others glory, is to him all absent and unknown. And thus destitute, how can he meet the onslaught of death? The infatuation of sin, now uncured and henceforth forever incurable, wrecks his soul for all eternity. The willful madness of unbelief has shut him from paradise, and darkened to him the face of Jehovah forever. And yet, with all this terror and anguish, in surest, nearest prospect, and in clearest vision before him, the sinner's trouble will not be accepted by Death as a discharge from your entering his ranks, or as a reason for his exempting you from donning his white livery of the shroud, or as a plea why you should not lie down in his halls with the worm as your mate, and with corruption as your pillow and your wrapper, and with despair as the ghastly and eternal heritage of your soul.

Is this carnage, then, to reign pitilessly, and hopelessly, and universally for evermore? Has the great destroyer received a commission to ride on his pale horse, with hell following hard after him, and leading our race in his train as his captivity and his prey, down through age upon age, without pause and without bound? Are men to go on, rolling from one rocky shelf to another

and a lower, in the cavernous pit of Tophet and "the second death," dropping and plunging to a deeper perdition for evermore?

The smoke of the torment of the willfully impenitent will go up, we answer, day and night, by the purpose of a just and justly incensed Jehovah. But, in this the day of opportunity and of repentance, there is proclaimed to us who yet survive One mightier than is either death or hell. It is the Prince of Life and the Lord of Glory. He came to destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.* But Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, in bringing rescue, must himself "taste of death"—must not only meet the common lot, but must bear upon himself the common and concentrated guilt of our race. Doing it, he tore from death its sting; and to them that believe he is become the author of life everlasting. In heaven, upon the throne, he is seen yet, as the Lamb that had been slain; the fresh and gory marks of conflict upon Him enhancing and irradiating his divine and proper glory. His people are forgiven all their sin, and receive the Holy Spirit to renew and to sanctify them, and to fit them for a land which death cannot invade, and where sorrow is unknown.

To them that receive this Christ, the war, though fierce, has lost its main terror, and is now stript of its real though not of all its apparent perils. Its dungeon is but a tunnelled entrance to the palace home; its cavern leads up, by a passage brief though dark, to galleries of more than imperial splendor, and terraces where summer never fades, and winter never blights. Some of Christ's servants have met death in forms of appalling cruelty and startling suddenness. Some have

* Hebrews ii. 14.

perished by inches under the corroding cancer; and others died on the torturing rack, or amid the stifling flames and smoke of the Auto-da-fe. On the ears of some, as they took leave of earth, came the taunt and the curse of the persecutor and the scoffer. The yells of hate, from a throng mad for his blood, have drowned the prayers of the meek sufferer, as in love and forgiveness he interceded for his murderers. But over all this "bitterness of death" faith in Jesus has triumphed. Death has been transmuted into gain. The soldier of Christ, asking no discharge, and "not accepting deliverance" by apostasy, went into the struggle and committed himself to the death-grapple, not only firm, but calm; not only calm, but cheerful; not only cheerful, but exulting, jubilant, and radiant; for he knew in whom he had believed: like Paul, he had fought a good fight, and looked for a crown of righteousness; like Job, knew well that his Redeemer liveth; and like Stephen, saw the Master awaiting his follower's ascent. This blessed Lord has brought life and immortality to light—has become the resurrection and the life, and the first fruits of them that slept. And to all his true people death, in this their Master's right, has become the gate of life. The war, now and to them, puts down the last enemy. Its struggles to them are the last contortions of the crushed tempter. Out of the corruption and carnage the believer emerges, to sin no more, to sigh no more, to fear no more. He joins the worship of a holier church, and enters on the felicities of a better country, where the inhabitant shall say no more, "I am sick." Out of the very grave he gets again a new and glorified body in the resurrection morn. And though it does not yet appear what this shall be; yet he shall be like Jesus, for he shall see him as he is; and so be forever with the Lord. As the daguerreotype

stamps on itself what it sees, so is the believer transformed, in the flashing and potent vision of his Lord, into the permanent likeness of what he beholds. To see Christ as he is, makes like unto Christ.

To him, then, mortality loses its ghastliness, and puts on already hopefulness and promise. The grave is like the wet and cold March day now brooding over our heads and miring our streets. Of darker hue, and moister, chiller air, indeed, than he might have chosen; but behind all this gloom, and behind all this damp, lie the treasures of bursting spring, and the glories of refulgent summer. The light afflictions, that are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. To the saint Death changes many of his offices. Does Pain walk at his side? But is he not also the queller of Strife and the calmer of Care? The aching head throbs no more; the swollen heart fetches no more sighs. The weary are at rest. He is, in one sense, the Destroyer; but he is also the Restorer. He brings back, through Christ's victorious grace, the lost innocence and peace of Eden. Is he the Divider, sundering the nearest ties, and riving asunder the household bands? But he is also the Re-uniter, gathering me to my dead who sleep in Jesus, and to "the general assembly of the first born." Is he the curse of the law? Is he not also, through our blessed Master, who magnified and satisfied that law, become to us who believe the end of sin, the gate of paradise—and the guerdon of a new, a better, and an unending life?

Such is the hope that the Christian earns from his Saviour's care and bounty, and clothed in which he takes his place in the ranks to meet the onset and shock of this war which is before us all. And such is the hope that the trifler, and the caviller, and the worldling, and the loiterer neglect to secure, or even affect to despise. But

to those who amongst you thus refuse Christ, the first death is the sharp, sudden prelude to the second death, that terrible and remediless ruin which is to cast both body and soul into the fire that is never quenched. As men of feeling and of sense, as those who shrink from slighter pains, and dread much more transitory and much more trivial woes, "can you dwell with everlasting burnings?" For "OUR GOD," as prophets and apostles testified, "IS A CONSUMING FIRE." Is it safe neglecting for one moment more, the only preparation, until the call of death startles us, and we are, with the wicked, driven away in our wickedness? Or will you not, here and now, enlist, a grateful penitent, under that Redeemer who died once, but now liveth to die no more; and who is to his people the Render of the tomb, and the Way to the Father?—the

"Death of death, and hell's Destruction."

XIII.

COMING TO CHRIST.

BY M. S. HUTTON, D.D.

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Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. JOHN vi. 37.

IT will be acknowledged by all who receive the Bible as the word of God, that Christ Jesus is man's only Saviour. It expressly declares, that there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. Our reason also would teach us, that if God himself had at so great expense provided such a Saviour there could be no other.

The exalted character of the Lord Jesus Christ would also in itself be an unanswerable argument in proof of the truth that there is no other Saviour.

It will also be acknowledged by all, that the mere fact that a Saviour has been provided does not secure the salvation of any adult sinner. There is a necessity for some kind of union, between the Saviour and the saved sinner. The parties must know and accept of each other. The Saviour must consent to save each individual, and each individual must consent and desire to be saved by him. Hence the announcement in the text: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." All whom Christ saves must come to Him. What, then, is the meaning of this expression? What is it to come to Christ. What are we to come for?

I need hardly remark, that no bodily approach is here intended. Christ is no longer on earth; and when he was here, many thronged him and pressed upon him who nevertheless were cast out. His most bitter enemies were often nearest to his person. Neither does coming to Christ consist in any merely outward act. It does not, therefore, mean to be baptized—nor to come to the Lord's table—nor to attend church—nor to kneel and utter words of prayer—nor to give our wealth for his cause and the advancement of his kingdom—nor anything else of merely outward duty. The language has respect to the frame of our minds. Matthew gives us this record, ix. 20: "And behold a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment, for she said within herself, 'If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole;'" and again (28), "And when Jesus was come into the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus saith unto them, 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' They said unto him, 'Yea, Lord.' Then touched he their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith be it unto you.' And their eyes were opened." Now if you will separate the outward action in these cases, and fasten your minds upon the state of heart and feeling with which these persons applied to Christ, you will have the meaning of the expression to come to Christ. Follow in imagination that poor woman as she works her way towards the Saviour, saying to herself, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment." She believed in Christ's ability to heal, and in his willingness to bestow the blessing. And mark the Saviour's reply: "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole." Not the fact that she came near him—not the fact that she touched him—but her faith, her confidence that he could and would heal her: that confidence was

coming to Christ. Again, in our Lord's reply to the blind men: "Believe ye that I am able to do this? According to your faith be it unto you." Suppose one of these men had been led merely by the other, and did not have any confidence in our Lord's ability, he would not have come to Christ, though he stood before him, and though the hand of Jesus rested upon his sightless eye-balls; nay, and his eye-balls would have remained sightless in despite of the Saviour's touch. "According to your faith be it unto you." They were fully persuaded of Christ's ability to grant their desires, and had confidence in his willingness to bestow the favor upon their application. This frame of spirit was coming to Christ. Now, my hearers, the gifts which Christ is exalted to bestow are repentance and the forgiveness of sins, salvation from sin, and heaven. And to come to him, is to believe that he can bestow these, and will bestow them on all who can seek them at his hands. If you desire Christ to save you from your sins, and trust him to do so, then you really come to him. Coming, and practically believing, are perfectly synonymous. The feeling of the healed woman, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment I shall be cured," was coming to Christ; and the sinner who simply believes and relies on the truth, Jesus Christ can and will save me, has come to Christ.

But the meaning of this expression, to come to Christ, will be further explained and illustrated as we endeavor to reply to a second inquiry, which here naturally suggests itself, viz.: "How can I come to Christ—how can I obtain repentance, and faith, and desire, and all which go to make up this frame of feeling styled coming to Christ?"

Let not my answer to this inquiry be deemed a mockery, when I only reiterate the direction, Come to Christ

For Christ is truly the author of the whole work, and he is a complete Saviour, and does meet every real want and necessity of the lost man. And I freely acknowledge that this, our second inquiry, is founded on *a real necessity*. No person can change his disposition, or induce a particular feeling, by merely resolving to do so. In the case of a sinner's feelings towards God, this is peculiarly true—there must be an influence from without, to induce such a change, and no being less than God himself, can perform the work. We can corrupt our moral disposition, render ourselves more and more sinful, but God alone can renew us—make us holy—give us repentance and faith in Christ. In the very verse of which our text is a part, Jesus says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" and a few verses farther on he remarks, "No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him;" and many serious, thoughtful persons are, even now, being taught this truth.

Were we to put their feelings into language, it would be in such words as these: "It seems to me to be a task beyond my strength and ability, to feel as I know I ought to do. The more I study my own disposition, the greater seems the power of sin within me. Even when I try to do right, I do wrong; and as for taking pleasure in the service and worship of God, I can love my family and friends—I can love business and pleasure—I can love wealth and reputation—but I cannot love God and religion as I ought. I cannot love my Bible and the Sabbath, and the preached word and prayer. I have tried to love them. It alarms me when I think of my sins, and of the rapidity with which my days are passing. It startles me, when death strikes down some of my friends and companions, and still more so, when I feel the power of disease upon myself. But the feel

ing soon passes away, and I remain the same that I was before. I am disheartened in regard to my soul's well-being, and at times am almost ready to say, 'I will think no more about religion.'"

Now, if there be any before me, whose feelings have in some degree been described by this language, I would endeavor to meet their difficulty, and in doing so, I would remind them of the remark, that all real difficulties are relieved by Christ. He, in becoming our Saviour, has in no respect left the work but half done, and our resource is to go to *him*—to go to him for everything. Repentance, or a return to God, is, my hearers, God's gift. It never originated with the sinner. God bestows it through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The language is, "Him hath God exalted, to give repentance and remission of sins." You are not first to repent of your sins, to be able or worthy to come to him—but to come to him that you may be able to repent. Not first to pray that you may come to him, but to come to him that you may pray. Not first to love him that you may come to him, but to come to him that you may love him. Not to be first melted into contrition, but to come to him that you may be melted into contrition. Not to wait for deep conviction of your sins before you come, but to come to him that you may have deep convictions. Coming to Christ always induces a deeper sense of sin. No man hates sin truly, until he sees it in the suffering and death of his Lord.

You are not first to have all your difficulties on the subject of religion solved, but to come to him, that your understanding may be cleared and your difficulty removed. Christ Jesus is prophet, priest, and king; you are to come to him as your teacher—come to him as your atoning priest—come to him as your king, and submit to his word and his rule. Come to *Him*. Him

first—him last. Him alone. Come to him for everything. Come to him for health, if you are sick—for wealth, if you are poor—for help, if you are weak—for hope, if you are desponding—for comfort in sorrow. He is your best friend. He is a complete Saviour. He has resources for every real want and woe of the human family. There is nothing in the whole compass of human necessity which Christ cannot bestow, and which, if you come to *him* for it, and submit to *his* will, he will bestow, if it can be made for your real good.

This, my hearers, is the great truth which I desire to press upon your hearts, the only hope, the only refuge, of lost man, his only deliverer, is Jesus Christ, and he is a complete deliverer. No other foundation can any man lay, save that which is laid, Christ Jesus. Oh, when will sighing humanity learn the lesson? When will the busy philanthropists, with their strong efforts to raise, elevate, and bless man, learn the simple truth? When will the poor struggle to do right? When will the worthy moralist, who would win heaven by his own good deeds? When will the careful and anxious soul believe in Christ, believe in God's Saviour, and trust in him alone for everything which they need, and come to him to receive it? Do I address even a careless, thoughtless, unfeeling man, one who cannot make himself care about religion as he knows he ought to do, even to him I give the same direction. Christ Jesus is his only hope. He can give him feeling, can give him repentance; only let him come to Christ for them. Go to Jesus, hearers, tell him all your difficulties, believe that he is able and willing to bestow whatever you need. Say, within yourselves, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole." Let no one fear that he will not be received, for it was to meet all such fears that our Lord himself gives the encourage-

ment contained in our text. Let us, then, thirdly, dwell a few moments on *this* point. The encouragement we have to come to Him. The expression in the text is intended to be very strong. The Saviour uses two negatives, and, literally translated, it would read: "*I will not, not cast out.*" It is intended to convey the strongest affirmative, as though he had said, "I do not only not cast him out, but I embrace him with all the energy of love. I will certainly receive him." Stronger, or clearer assurance and encouragement than this, no one can or ought to ask; the plain, and positive declaration from Christ's own lips should convince every one, and remove all doubt forever. But though I cannot add to this evidence, yet there are certain considerations calculated to impress the truth, and which may, therefore, be dwelt upon with profit, and the first of these which I mention is, the character of Jesus, as displayed in his treatment of the sons of men. Look at the record of his sojourn upon our earth. Can you find a single instance of his rejecting, or refusing a proper request—a request for any good? Did ever a sick, or sorrowing one come to Him in vain? The only request which he refused to his disciples, was their desire that he would call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. He preferred to save them, not to destroy them; and he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." There has never been known a single instance of his refusing to receive any who came to him. I challenge the world to produce one who can truly say, "I desired to come to Jesus, and I did come; I cast myself at his feet, I placed all my hope on him, and he rejected me." No, no, he has often been compelled to declare of men: "Ye will not come to me;" but never has any man been able to say, "He cast me out when I lay at his feet;" while how many thousands now in

heaven, and many still on earth, will testify I never went to him in vain.

And this accords with what is said of him throughout the Bible. All the types by which he was prefigured, show that he rejects none who come to him. The Paschal Lamb was for all. The Brazen Serpent was lifted up in the sight of all Israel, and whoever looked on it was healed. The City of Refuge was placed on a hill, with its doors open night and day. The angel's announcement was "glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." The language of the prophets was: "Ho, every one who thirsteth, come ye to the waters." They did not even pause to describe the thirst. The invitation is directed to every one who feels that earth has a want which it cannot supply. "Come unto me all ye who labor, and who are heavy laden," was Christ's own invitation; and here also I would have you remark that there is no description of the toil or the burden. Be it what it may, Jesus bids us bring it him, promising rest, and giving us the assurance that if he does not remove it, he will make it easy and light. And the last invitation of the Bible, the invitation which comes from Jesus, seated upon the throne of his glory, is the freest of all. "Come, whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life *freely*." Consider also his mission, God so loved the world as to send his Son. He came not only to save the lost, but to seek them; how certain is it that if a lost one seeks him he will save him. Consider also what was required of him, before he could be placed before the ruined race as man's Saviour. The wrath of God, the horrors of an undone eternity, the scorn and reproach of men, the opposition of Satan with all hell in his train, the sins of the world, lay before him; the cross, the death of agony and of ignominy stood in full view, and must be endured before he could

save men, and yet, in view of all, he cries, as if with exultation: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Tell me, hearers, if he endured all this in order that he might constitute himself the hope and the helper of man? Can any one doubt his truth when he says, "I will in no wise cast out any who come to me." Oh, is it not injustice, ingratitude, crime, for any one to doubt, for a single moment, the sympathy of Jesus Christ, his readiness, or his power to grant every right desire of the sinner who lies a suppliant at his feet? Come then, my hearers, come one and come all to Jesus. Thou, sorrowing one, to receive comfort; thou, O Christian, to receive grace to make thee what thou art conscious thou oughtest to be. Come ye who feel that you are sinners and desire pardon. He will not, not cast you out. Come ye careless and cold-hearted, and hard-hearted; even thou, O man, who sayest to thyself, "I have no care for my soul; up to this day I never listened to a sermon, nor attended to a word in the Bible; I have no wish to hear of Christ, or God, or eternal things." Yes, even to thee, I say come to Christ for right feeling. Though you have no care for your soul, thou art not uncared for; Christ Jesus cares for thy soul, and wishes to save it. Though thou dost not care for Christ, yet he cares for you, and bids you come to him for the new heart and the right spirit. He says he will by no means cast thee out. Christ did not come into the world because people were caring about their souls, but because we are lost. And *thou*, O hardened man, art the more lost on account of thy hardness. Unless Christ soften and draw thee, there is, above all others, no hope for thee.

Are there any before me whose feelings are the reverse of these, who say, in despondency, there is no hope for me? No! I have committed such great sins; I have so often resisted the strivings of God's Spirit; I

am so old in sin, there is *no* hope, no, no hope. To *you* Jesus says: "*I* am *thy* hope, thou hast, indeed, no other. Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me there is help, certain help. I came to save such as thee. Come, I will in no wise cast thee out."

XIV.

WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE SAVED?

BY WM. IVES BUDINGTON, D.D.,

Pastor of the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church.

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.—Acts xvi. 30, 31.

The first thing that demands our notice in the inquiry of the deeply anxious jailer is the difference between it and the question of the young ruler, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" The jailer's is a cry for deliverance as from a present and fearful calamity: the ruler's language is that of a trafficker who would do one great good to purchase another; or, at best, it is that of a hero, who would win a prize by some high endeavor. The stand-point of the two inquirers is not only unlike, but opposite. The man who has no consciousness of sin, or of danger because of sin, simply asks, How shall I attain an infinite good? He merely contemplates a world of brightness, whose sunny skies are never traversed by a cloud, and whose days never set in darkness; and he would know how to reach it. On the contrary, he who feels himself to be under sin, doing not what he would, but what he hates; who feels that dark and heavy clouds are gathering on his horizon, and fast rising and circling around him; it is for light and deliverance that such a man calls; "Oh, that these clouds might roll away, that the sun-light might

pierce them, and warm my heart as with God's approving smile!"

Now it does not admit of a question, that the religion of the gospel is presented to us as balm for the wounded heart, the remedy for disease, deliverance for the captive. It does not hold before us in the distant heavens a crown of glory, and say to the strong and ambitious, Seize it! It is not merely an appeal to the aspiration of the human heart, but it comes "to seek and save the lost;" to give "rest to all that labor and are heavy laden." It is not enough for a man to say, "I am ignorant, and I desire to be enlightened." This will not give him the needed preparation to open the Scriptures and learn their contents. The great object of the gospel is not to convey intelligence on spiritual and eternal things. This, indeed it does incidentally, but ever subordinately to its chief end of saving the sinful. Nor, again, is it sufficient for a man to say, "I feel an aching void within me, and I am persuaded that my nature is fitted for and requires something higher and better than earth. I aspire after an infinite good." This, indeed, is in itself most proper, and of all aspirations is the noblest; but this alone does not prepare a soul to understand and receive that gospel of the grace of God, which comes to the undeserving, which is, from first to last, a salvation, and to which the pre-requisite, absolute and indispensable, is the sense of sin, the conscious need of being saved.

Behold, my hearers, how multiform and abounding are the evidences that salvation is the whole theme and burden of the gospel of Christ. The very name he received upon coming into the world indicated the purpose for which he came. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel of annunciation, "for he shall save his people from their sins." "Repent ye, for the kingdom of

heaven is at hand," was the preaching of Christ's forerunner, and of Christ himself, at the beginning of his ministry; heralding this great truth, that the sense and confession of sin was the one thing essential to the reception of Christ. "I came not," he afterwards said, "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And what is the representation given us in the Apocalyptic visions of St. John? Do not the redeemed cast down their crowns before the Lamb, saying, "For thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood?"

It cannot be doubted, therefore, that the gospel is a salvation; and to those of you who not only *are*, but *feel* that you are sinners, and under the burden desire release, the message of the gospel will be at once intelligible and welcome! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

It would seem incredible, it must be confessed, that a mere belief of any kind should have power enough to effect a salvation, stopping not short of a transformation of character and a reversal of eternal destinies. But the record is clear and unmistakable, that our redemption from sin and death turns upon our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are some things, which it is quite immaterial whether one believe or not. But there is one belief which makes all the difference in the world. To believe in Christ, in his character and services, in his present power and purposes, that though he was God and *with* God, he became a man *with* men; that though he was rich he became poor; though he was sinless, he became a sin-offering; and that having died and risen and ascended, he is now "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins;"—to believe this, to have this revelation stand

forth before the mind's eye, as the wonder of angels, the song of the redeemed, the hope of men; this is an era in any man's history, rising immeasurably above all others; it is a change amounting to a new birth; it makes the man a new man, opening within him a fountain of new and tender and holy affections, producing childship, and bringing nigh to God the Father, as a brother to Christ the Son of God, the heir of all things! It is faith in a person, not in a principle or a fact, an existing person, that he lives and loves as truly as he did when he became a tenant of the manger; as truly as when, in death, he breathed forgiveness from the cross over the multitude whose faces were upturned in careless scorn or fierce malignity.

Now thus to believe in Christ is to be saved; that is, to begin the experience of salvation at once, and be in the way to all that it imports forever hereafter. In this salvation, we may distinguish these three things: a present victory over sin and temptation, assurance of God's forgiving love, and a settled peace. If it can be shown that faith in Christ effects each and all of these three things, an inward renewal, an outward hope before God, and the peace of a perfect love that casts out fear, then surely it will be acknowledged that believing in Christ we are saved.

1. Let us look, then, first at the effect of faith in the crucified Son of God in delivering from the love and dominion of sin.

Believing in Christ you love him, and, loving him, you love what he loves, and hate what he hates, and this is holiness. Believing in Christ, you will say, my Lord did this and I will do it for his dear sake; my Lord walked here, and here I will walk, remembering him; these are his words, and I will keep them, pondering them in my heart, and thus will I love him and show

my love. He has friends in the world, and to their company I will join myself, sorrowing in their sorrow, and rejoicing in their joy. He has established his church among men, and

> For her my tears shall fall,
> For her my prayers ascend;
> To her my cares and toils be given,
> Till toils and cares shall end.

In one word, Christ is my friend, my best friend. He has laid me under infinite obligations, and I will be *his* friend, I will give him my warmest, deepest, most constant love. Such a faith as this saves, and *is* salvation; and it is the only power that really can bring salvation. The law cannot, the loveliness of virtue cannot, nor yet the deformity of vice; but the grateful sense of a Saviour can! Love awakens love; it is the strongest influence we receive, the strongest we put forth. A divine love for us, towards us, and in us, endows us with a divine power to follow after holiness and realize it. When the sense of a Saviour's love awakens in your heart love to Christ, you will, for his sake, be strong to do and to suffer what otherwise you were too weak to do. "The love of Christ will constrain" you, as it did Paul, "to live henceforth, not unto yourself, but unto him who died for you and rose again," and simply for this reason, that Christ desires it, that he died for this end. This is the whole philosophy of your salvation. You love Christ, and your love to him is the attraction that draws you after him, away from sin, upwards and along the "mountain track" of purity and of duty. The first effect of love to Christ, therefore, is to renew the soul in love to him. It makes the believer a new man in his desires and purposes; it is with him a simple matter of experience; he feels it, and knows it.

2. Faith likewise saves, because it inspires the soul with a confident hope of the forgiveness of sins. And this, because it is promised, because of a direct and solemn asseveration. The believer in Christ is forgiven already, and will be forgiven publicly at the last day. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth in Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." This cuts off argument, and silences reply. We have a *Thus saith the Lord;* the believer is forgiven, because God has spoken it and will make it good; and he knows it, because he believes God, and his assurance of forgiveness will be calm and lofty and imperturbable, just as he is able firmly and unfalteringly to believe. So emphatically is faith salvation, that God promises forgiveness upon the condition of faith, and faith is also the *sense* of forgiveness.

3. Once more, faith in Christ is salvation, because it gives peace. This is oftentimes and usually the earliest effect of faith in Christ as a Saviour, so that the young convert commonly thinks himself a believer, because his faith brings him peace. I know that some do not realize this peace, and go seeking for it many painful days. But such believers look for comfort to themselves, when it can be found only by looking away from one's self to Christ. Whosoever learns this first great lesson, to look away from himself, and forget himself, to look to another, know that his help comes to him from without, to look to Christ adoringly, trustingly—and there is nothing so radically opposite to selfishness as this—whosoever can do this, and has done it, finds peace. The eye fills with light, only by looking away from itself to the sun-light that is perpetually flooding the heavens. He enjoys nature the most, who, forgetting himself, is absorbed in the beauty and grandeur of the Creator's

works. It is equally so with Christ and joy in him! He is the "light of men;" the Father's love streams upon us from the face of Christ; he is at once the exhaustless fountain of grace, and the very embodiment of God's love; and really to believe this, that is, to have a felt sense of it, is to have a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

What, then, is lacking to prove that faith in Christ saves? If it redeems from the love and practice of sin; if it entitles to forgiveness at the hand of God; if it gives peace, what more can salvation be? If these three things be in you, and abound, what more can you ask, what more can you have, what more desire? Yet faith in Christ does this; has done it many millions of times, is doing it now, and will do it for you! Will you not, then, believe, and believe now, just where you are, and as you are? Observe and bear carefully in mind these two things:

1. That your present, your only duty, is believing. This stands next to you. You have not to do other things first, and this afterwards; but this first, and all other things afterwards. You are not to make yourself worthy to go to Christ and fit to believe, but going to Christ, to *become* worthy of him, believing in Christ to *acquire* fitness. The positive declaration of the text, that you are to be saved by believing in Christ, denies, in the most emphatic manner, that you can begin your salvation before you believe, or by any good act of your own, merit eternal life. Works of supererogation are out of the question. All you can do God requires; and once failing this, you cannot merit life. The condemnation of God's violated law is upon you, your powers are enfeebled, and self-restoration is impossible. Sin once committed, you cannot look to yourself, or to any performances of your own to save you. First of all, you

need forgiveness, and this is promised only to faith; you need renewing, and this is effected only by believing; you need peace for the present and hope for the future, and these are the fruits of faith. Accept, then, of Christ at once, without attempting any preliminary work. Nothing but the sense of sin is necessary to make salvation real and welcome. And do not wait for any deeper sense of sin than you now possess; let what you have lead you to Christ before it forsake you. If you have *one* sin to confess and to be forgiven, go to Christ. You may each of you believe now, you ought to believe, you must believe, if you would be saved.

2. But do not expect too much as involved in the act of believing.

If you imagine that to believe is all, that a single act of faith perfects your character, you will make a calamitous mistake. You will suppose that you have not believed, when you have; and so you will be looking for something that can never come, and which, if it ever seemed to come, would be the worst of delusions. Believing is but beginning. It is for the past forgiveness of sins, and for the future the working power by which, through grace, you are to work out your salvation. The doctrine is briefly this. The road to heaven begins at the gateway of faith. A true sanctification has for its beginning the confession of sins and reliance upon Christ for forgiveness, and for its ending the same; the first act and the last is the same; the motive power that carries the believer all along the highway of a glorious sanctification is love to Christ, the Saviour. Do not mistake upon a point so plain and fundamental as this. There is only one thing in religion, which is sudden, instantaneous, and complete in a moment—and this is the beginning. Conversion, from the very nature of the case, must be instantaneous. There must be

a moment in which the act of turning takes place, but thereafter there will be a progressive growth in all virtue and loveliness of character. To be a Christian in a true and proper sense, is to awake to the sense of sin, and under the burden of it to cast one's self upon Christ, as the Saviour of sinners, in gratitude and hope. To be a Christian in a still truer and more proper sense, is to have travelled far and long towards the goal of conformity to Christ, until, shining in the light and wearing the lineaments of his character, the believer is a Christian in the sense of being Christ-like! "The salvation of your soul," says the Apostle Peter, "is the *end* of your faith." It is in its fullness a perfection of character, unsullied by a stain; such a love and knowledge of Christ as, with mirror-like fidelity, gives back the image of his glory. It is lamentable ignorance of what it is to be a Christian, to suppose that it is possible to be all it implies all at once. No! it is the gradual detection and correction of mistakes, of shortcomings and transgressions; it is the evolution, by degrees, of all that is in us by nature; successive and surprising discoveries of what had lain all unrevealed to consciousness before, or at least to conscience; and in the light of this better self-knowledge, the mortification of all that is wrong, and the engrafting and substitution of the right, the beautiful, and the true. Did those twelve men, who were privileged for three years to accompany the person of our Lord, become Christians all at once? The time of trial came, and the storm broke upon the the head of their Master; and what is written of those disciples, but that all of them forsook him and fled? Peter did more than desert him, he denied him with an oath. And so deep went that after repentance, so bitter were the tears he shed, and so much did they wash away, that our Lord called it a second conversion.

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Many a Christian—nay, most—after they have set out in the divine life, and learn how much it imports to be a Christian, how much in their hearts stands in the way of it, how hardly and how slowly they make any perceptible progress; doubt if they are disciples at all; and yet because they are, they are not left to abandon the effort, but "are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."

But the greatness of the work to be done makes an immediate beginning the more necessary and urgent, that beginning which is true and hopeful; that you confess your sins, and look gratefully, obediently to Christ, the author and finisher of your faith. This beginning is your duty and your privilege to-day; it is even now within your reach. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" you shall have a present, progressive, and everlasting salvation. The guilt of sin shall be pardoned; the power of sin broken; and the effects of sin for ever supplanted by the grace of God.

XV.

MEN TO BE RECONCILED TO GOD, THROUGH CHRIST.

BY R. S. STORRS, JR., D.D.

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We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.—2 COR. v. 20. (Last clause.)

To be reconciled to God!—it is necessarily the first and greatest want of all His intelligent and immortal creatures who are in any way alienated from him. It is, as human history testifies, the vague, but real and imperative longing of human nature itself, underlying all others, more permanent than they. All systems of heathenism, with their sacrifices and penances, their instituted priesthoods, their costly offerings, their destroying pilgrimages, their smoking piles and bloody immolations, are built at the base on this desire: to be reconciled to God! By them human nature is sought to be elevated; by them the Divine Being is sought to be propitiated; till the creature and the Creator, respectively arising and descending from their positions, shall meet upon the plane of Reconciliation. The same desire is indicated as well, is shown with appealing fervor and emphasis, in the poetry of the world. The same good is recognized as the great good of man, by its noblest philosophy, its most searching and elevated moral instructions.

For it is a fact which we cannot fail to recognize and feel, as we clearly investigate the condition of man, either in the individual or in the mass, that he is not now in sympathy with God; that he does not now coöperate with him, or stand in a filial relation towards him. It is a fact to which conscience emphatically testifies; of the inward conviction of which no man can get rid. A sense of severance and remoteness from God, a vague impression of responsive repellency and condemnation on his part—this is at the bottom of all the unrest, the fearful apprehension, the dark anticipation, the swayings back and forth of religious opinion, oscillating for ever between skepticism and superstition, which confront us in history. And this each man will find for himself, in his own moral consciousness, as he calmly considers it, or lets it frankly and freely speak.

Our relations to God should be more intimate than to any other being; as he is naturally nearer to us than any other, fulfilling offices for us the most constant and essential, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor. Our relations to Him should be those of perfect mutual confidence, with an even unbounded love and gladness. A filial, adoring affection on our part, uttering itself in all forms of activity, and making every work a worship; a divine benignity and tenderness on his part, replying to our love—these should mark our relation to him. They should be relations of conscious spiritual intercourse indeed, and of the utmost assimilation and sympathy of spirit and thought. The possibility of this is conceivable by us, and the simple possibility is proof that we should realize it; as conscience and reason conspire to assure us.

But instead of this, our relations to God are, as we know, as a matter of fact, relations of distance, of alienation and coldness, of an utter want of affectionate sympathy and intelligent communion. We do not like to

retain God in our thoughts. He gives us no pledge, through that sense of security which the angels feel, and which Christians on earth know the foretaste of, that he either loves us, or regards us with any moral complacence. We know, on the other hand, every man for himself, that our attitude towards God, though natural, is not normal; that we are far from him in temper and in tastes, while yet his government always surrounds us, and his person is nearer at every moment than that of any most valued friend.

He surrounds us, surveys us, upholds us, directs us, in his continual providential administration, at every part and instant of our being; he is with us in our dwellings, our walks, our solitudes; is with us in our business, as well as in our rest; is with us through life, and is with us wherever the mystery of Death at last arrests and overshadows the soul. And yet we do not feel ourselves near to him, in moral correspondence, in the sympathy of purpose, the communion of thought, the sweet interchange of affection. And it would be a positive relief to us sometimes, while we remain in this our usual moral state, if either HE or WE were annihilated! if we could feel that he would no more reach us where we are; or if we could remove to some remote planet where his presence and government should cease to pursue us. If men had the power, in such awful moments of conscious antagonism, they would put the Deity out of existence, in order to be rid of this oppressive and constant sense of distance from him, and of mutual alienation. If their thoughts were then thunderbolts, not even the glorious wisdom of God, his unmatched goodness, would shield him from their stroke!

This we know, as I said, each man for himself. And however we may be inclined to forget it, and to reason about the dignity of our nature, as if the mere consti-

tution of our being were enough of itself to ally us with God, no reasoning and no rhetoric can hide from us the facts, which are plain and palpable at the centre of our consciousness—that we do not stand towards him as we should do; that instead of being in sympathy with him, we are in a state of alienation and severance. No man, it seems to me, whether he acknowledges the Scriptures or not, can attentively survey his own inner life, can analyze his conduct to its principles and motives, without keenly feeling this. It is, indeed, the wail of the World; the ever re-appearing refrain of poetry; the under-beat of the deepest philosophy; 'the still, sad music of humanity.'

It is, then, the instant suggestion of reason, it is the imperative mandate of prudence, that we should seek in some way at once, and in some sufficient and authorized way, to be 'reconciled' to God. It is Death to be at war with him! Death certain, remediless, perfect, fearful! It is the destruction of every hope; the utter overthrow of all our dearest and most cherished desires; the paralysis of the soul, for every good and every joy! For GOD is the Supreme One! He turns the earth to the sun in the morning, and carries it through its swift revolution, bringing the shadow of evening in its season, with only a silent motion of his will. He holds the sun itself in its place, and yet bears it onward, with the planets around it, through the realms of the vast and unseen ether, from age to age, without one effort. He makes all worlds obedient to his will; establishing all their laws by his word, sustaining their forces by his decree, and holding them up at every moment from the abysm of nothingness over which he equally at the outset suspended them. And there is no effect conceivable by us, too great for his power, or which, as matched against that power, is great at all; as there is no relation or fact, too secret

for his knowledge, no existence too remote to be infolded by his presence!

To sin against Him, therefore, to be in a state of hostility toward God—it is certain destruction to any of his creatures. If it is not annihilation, it is only because it is something more fearful than even annihilation! It were better that we bared our brow to the lightning, and dared it to smite us; better that we stood beneath the mountain in its fall, and defied it to crush us; that we planted ourselves in the path of the ocean, when it rises in its might and sweeps leagues landward with the rush of its billows; or faced the conflagration, and refused to retreat when it rushes over squares and lays cities in the dust; better either of these, better anything else, than that we opposed or withstood His power, to which all these are subordinate and trifling! A breath of his will, and we perish on the instant. One motion of his mind, and every faculty and force of our being ceases to be, or becomes the abode of intolerable pain.

Nor only because of these measureless perils attending the want of it, is it the greatest good of man to be reconciled to God; but, equally, because of the good to be realized, the unmatched and unspeakable spiritual goods, to be gained through that! The same powers and prerogatives which make God so fearful and terrible as an enemy, make him equally supreme as a benefactor to his friends; the author, by necessity, of benefits to them which our poor words cannot express, because they are great as our immortality, which language cannot compass; because they are vast as his infinitude, before which thought itself grows weak! Simply to love a being like God, so great and pure, and constant in his glory—it is of itself, to every intelligence, the highest good! as it is the one infinite evil and mischief to be in any way dissevered from Him! To be

in heart. affiliated with God, to feel his strength, wisdom and grace flowing in upon us, and filling our souls as with rivers of peace—every mind must instinctively recognize that as the highest possible attainment of our nature; in which that nature is consummated and crowned, made free of the world, supreme above chance, and ready for immortality!

Around this, too, all other great attainments and delights are naturally gathered, and through it they all are to be realized. The utmost assurance of security and safeness; the promise of a knowledge, a heavenly wisdom, which is as yet unimaginable by us; affiliation with all celestial beings; the perfection of purity; the keenest delight and ecstasy of soul; a joy which the centuries of heaven itself cannot outlast, and shall only accumulate;—*all that God can bestow*, whose resources are of course yet unknown to us; *all that man can receive*, whose soul in its deep and vast capacities hath not been fully sounded and measured by any experience; all this, prolonged through the cycles of the Future, is the natural inheritance of him who hath God for his father and friend, who is in his soul affined to him!

We cannot fully tell what shall be the nature or the greatness of his inheritance! Thanks to God that we cannot! We only know that it surpasses our thought; and that they who have seen it declare it to be, as we should know from God's greatness that it must be, in its glory unspeakable! The utmost scope and height of language fails and is baffled before the greatness of this theme. It is one of the noblest of all the attractions which to the believer are grouped about heaven, that we cannot foresee what shall be there; and that only when we reach that world shall we know fully, what now from limitation of nature we cannot know, what "God hath prepared for them that love him."

It is, therefore, in every view—on account of both its negative and its positive relations, because it shields us from central ruin, and because it assures us of immeasurable benefits—the grandest good for man, to be in the truest sense "reconciled to God!" Unless he is so, he has no real and permanent good, in possession or in prospect. The want of this, to the thoughtful mind, makes all prosperity precarious and poor. The want of this makes a full and permanent peace in the soul a thing impossible. The attainment of this must give an element of constant, quick, inexhaustible delight, even to those most wearied and harassed. The beams of joy parting the clouds shall shine on such and make their very trouble radiant. For, according as we stand to the Sovereign of the universe, that universe is to us a palace or a prison! According as we stand to that ordaining and perfect Mind, which lives throughout and vivifies the creation, the creation is a sphere to us of progress and peace, or of entanglement and ruin!

And now the gospel offers a way in which we may be "reconciled to God." Because it offers this, it is in the truest sense a GOSPEL; a message of glad tidings; a real Evangel. Because it offers this, God's wisdom and grace are most signally revealed in it. Because it offers this, the angels above are interested in it, and delight to record, and delight undoubtedly to forward and assist, every fresh advance which it makes on the earth. Because it offers this, it is the highest privilege of man first to accept this gospel himself, and to conform to it his own heart and life, and then to proclaim it to others around him, and strive to bring them to accept and love it. Because it offers this, on sufficient authority, and with the adequate guaranty of God's promise that whoso accepts and applies it aright shall never be disappointed, but shall as surely as life continues know all

the glory and charm of heaven—because the Gospel thus speaks to men, it is the one Supreme Revelation; which shall not be superseded; which may not be set aside, as systems of morality and philosophy may be; which can be surpassed by no civilization, and can be replaced, when once it has been lost, by no contrivance or plan of man; the system in which the highest spiritual *life of the world* is vitally, centrally, and inseparably bound up!

More than for all its marvels and its morals; more than for all its great examples, its general teachings, the splendor and scope of the history that attends it, the freedom and the peace, the great advance in all good arts, which it scatters on its path as it marches over the earth;—more than for these, or any of these, the Gospel is precious, and is to be prized, as showing the mode in which man certainly, in which man only, can be reconciled to God, and thus made an heir of wisdoms and felicities supreme and everlasting.

WHAT IS THAT MODE THEN? The question is one of transcendent importance; and one which the Gospel takes care to answer, in the most exact and perspicuous manner. Whatever else it may leave doubtful, it leaves no shadow of obscurity on this! Whatever else it may but lightly and casually touch—as it touches, for instance, the nature, the powers, and the offices of angels, or the station and the functions of saints in the future—it treats of this way of reconciliation in every part, and never falters or tires in presenting it.

A man is only to be reconciled to God THROUGH FAITH IN HIS SON: in Him, whom God has specially appointed, and has conspicuously set forth, to be the mediator between Him and ourselves:—this is always the representation of the Scriptures; distinct explicit, simple, comprehensive; not to be confounded with anything else, and not to be overlooked.—It is not by works of

a practised morality that we are to raise ourselves to acceptance with God. It is not by intellectual exertion and attainment, though these should make us familiar as students with all the forms of human thought, and affluent in soul with all the noblest mental culture. What are all our attainments and powers, at the highest, to God's eternal knowledge and faculty? We may more easily reach the stars by climbing our ladders, than reach to God through a parallel and equal intellectual supremacy! It is not by success in our several avocations, whatever they may be, as merchants, lawyers, inventors, teachers. It is not even by the sacrifice of our goods, the denial of our desires; by priestly intercession, or the invocation of saints. It is not by these, or by any of these, that we are severally to be reconciled to God. But it is by personal Faith in his Son: a faith which each is competent to exercise; a faith which hath in it submission and sympathy; which leads us to devote ourselves entirely to Christ, and which carries us spontaneously into all such actions as we know will be dear and beautiful to Him. This is the power, this the act, by which, through Christ, we are "reconciled to God."

Where this is wanting, that reconciliation cannot possibly be accomplished. Where this is experienced, there that for which the world's wide heart inarticulately longs, the desire after which gives pathos and dignity to its best religions and highest literatures,—even that assimilation to God's spirit and will, and that re-adjustment of all our broken relations to him, which moralists and philosophers have searched for in vain, and without which no soul can be at rest,—is certainly, perfectly, finally secured. We are thenceforth, whether we ourselves are at once and fully aware of it or not, from that moment onward if the faith has been a real one, the submission complete, we are the friends, the children

of God; his children and heirs; partakers of his favor, and expectants of his home! And nothing can ever dispart us from him. Adversity, opposition, obloquy, pain—they all are powerless to put us a hair-breadth beyond the circle of his perfect sympathy. They only, indeed bring us nearer his heart, and assure us a more unbounded expression of his out-flowing and radiant love! And death is but the dark-robed messenger, to usher us into his high presence, and open to us the Beatific Vision.

This is wonderful, amazing; yet, when we remember God's wisdom, and consider his grace, it is no wise incredible or even improbable. Nay, we can ourselves see, as taught by the Scriptures, precisely the way in which it is accomplished, and admire the wisdom which hath chosen this method.

In order that we be "reconciled to God," from whom we have departed, there is necessary as the first act Repentance on our part; a repentance that suddenly and sharply arrests us in the course we have pursued, and leads us thenceforth to serve him with fidelity.—And such a repentance is involved and presupposed in the primary act of submission to Christ. Faith in him, to be real, must embrace and express this. Wherever this is not found, there the faith is evidently superficial or hypocritic; a mere motion of the sensibilities, or altogether a sham; not a central and personal act of the soul. Wherever it is real, one turns from impurity with immediate recoil. Not as under constraint of an outward law, but in the impulse of an inward desire, mourning for the past, he gives up his sins!

In order that we be "reconciled to God," and be placed in normal relations to him, just such relations as we should have sustained if we had never sinned at all, just such as the angels now know and rejoice in—and we never can be satisfied till we stand in just these relations

to God!—it is necessary that atonement be made for the past; that our long life of restless ungodliness, extending over ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, perhaps sixty or seventy years, and including a thousand acts and thoughts, each week and day, every one of which has been in essential and evident opposition to God—that this be expiated by some atonement; so that the law of Holiness shall be honored, which is the supremest law of the universe, and dearest to God's heart, even so as it would have been if we and all others had perfectly kept it. I say this is indispensable to the outward perfectness, as well as to our interior assurance, of reconciliation and harmony with God; and so all men instinctively feel it. And so all systems of penance and sacrifice, which have been in fact universal on earth, have arisen to recognize and to satisfy this want.

If God did not supremely value his law of Holiness, the universe would be worth nothing, with him at the head of it! It had better be terminated before to-day's sunset, than to have him say—as he would in effect say, if he pardoned sinners without an atonement—"Live on as you will, but repent before death, and that is satisfactory! All then shall be well with you!" The song of the seraphim could then no more aspire before God. The angelic hosts might well that instant rustle their plumes for flight from heaven. For that tolerance of Impurity, once let with its depraving force into the heart of Him who is infinite, would strike the safeguards from around every saint, and make the highest presence-angel most conscious of his perpetual insecurity! An atonement for sin before it is forgiven, is not more the demand of God's holy mind, than it is the necessary safeguard of the universe! For if He begins to look lightly upon sin, a darker than the primal chaos is imminent at once!

And now, just just such expiation as this is provided by Christ, in his vicarious obedience, suffering, and death on the cross. In the mystery of his divine condescension, of his unspeakable love for sinners, he voluntarily was made a human subject of the law which he had given. He obeyed it as a man. He expressed in all his life its purity. He even met that Death of a strange anguish, unspeakable, unsearchable, with the hiding of the face of the Father himself attending and crowning it, when standing in the sinner's place. And so he honored and magnified the law, and showed most clearly God's infinite regard for it; and made it possible for the penitent to be pardoned. He made the law as clearly supreme in God's administration, as it would have been if every man had been perfectly holy, or every sinner had been forever condemned!—And now the fullness of that atonement is appropriated to himself by every man who receives it in faith. And so again he is "reconciled to God." The chasm of the past is bridged over between us, and a new record, white and clean, is opened for every penitent offender.

But a yet more subtle change than this is demanded in order to such reconciliation; a change in the spirit and the heart of the man, as well as in his outward and forensic relations. He must become like God himself in temper and purpose, in order to be truly affiliated with him. A new sympathy must be born in him, with the views, the plans, and the spirit of Him from whom he has so radically departed; and he never can be properly related to him until this is gained. Every man's moral instincts declare this to him, when he lets them speak with unbiased voice! The need of a regenerating power has a voice in philosophy, as well as in the Scripture.

And this again, this inward change of preference and

taste, of desire and character, is both pre-supposed in the experience of Faith, and is carried forward towards completion by that.—Christ comes to manifest God to men. The character of the Unseen is embodied in him, and so through him is revealed unto the world. He who gives himself to Christ, then, with affectionate faith, devoting himself thenceforth to his service, does it because already he sees in him a being deserving veneration and love, and the active obedience to which these will prompt. And the more he contemplates the character of Christ, the more he studies his life and work, and sees to what ends his plans are directed—the more he personally communes with him, in thought and prayer, and recalls the great work he undertakes for his people, the great offices he fulfills for them, the perfect spirit he always expresses—the more that man who believes in Christ is led to honor, to adore, and to serve him; the more does he come into intimate sympathy of spirit with him; the more does the influence of the Spirit in Christ transform, irradiate, purify his soul.

Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He is in some measure, at the beginning of this course, as is shown by his faith, in harmony with Christ: who is, in fact, but God himself, revealed amid our human conditions; the shining forth of the glory which before was invisible; the express image of the Divine Being. He comes to be more and more closely and fully in sympathy with Him, as his faith exerts more influence on him; as it governs his faculties, suffuses his sensibilities, enlightens and quickens his intellect itself; till not to sympathize with God in his plans, in his views of human nature, in his reverence for righteousness, in his benevolent regard for all moral beings—not thus to be in

harmony with God, and the most essential agreement of feeling, would give him the keenest and inmost pain. It becomes evident to him that this is the fearfullest discord in the universe: to disagree with God! a discord from which he inwardly recoils. God's will becomes his will; and the thoughts of Him whom Christ reveals are the law and the life of his ardent mind.

And thus at last, when this process is perfected—and it is one which all of us have seen, in those who grew more god-like yearly until God took them to himself—when this is perfected, the reconciliation with God is complete! There can be nothing added to it, to make it more perfect; and nothing but fresh sin can arise to disturb it! The relation of that man to God is as perfect as if from his birth he never had sinned. Nay, more than this! It would seem from the Scriptures that God is ready to show him more favor, because he has turned from iniquity to Faith; as the father rejoiced with peculiar tenderness over the prodigal son restored; as the shepherd for the sheep, and the woman for the coin, which had severally been lost and then been found. God seems to be represented in such passages as these, as taking the Christian to relations of peculiar intimacy with himself; rejoicing over him with a tenderness of affection in which the angels do not partake! And certainly the relations between that man and God, between man the believer and God the Redeemer, are thenceforth those of entire agreement; of an ever-ascending fullness of sympathy!

The sins of him who thus believes are all forgiven. He has turned from sin, and has given himself in free dedication to God in his Son. He loves Christ now; and more and more rejoices in him, as he pursues the Christian path. He loves the God who is manifested in Christ; and feels his highest powers respond to that

which is highest, purest in the universe. And so he is inwardly, perfectly, finally RECONCILED TO God! What never in any other way can be attained, is attained by him perfectly, through this simple act of faith in God's Son; an act apparently small in itself, but great in its nature, accepted of God, and so transcendent and immortal in its results. And all the promises which God hath given to those who are his friends—the present peace, the immediate security, the future glory, the long celestial experiences on high, for which all centuries of time were too short, for which our present capacities are not adequate—all these are for him who has from the heart obeyed this great injunction of the apostle; who has been truly "reconciled to God" through Jesus Christ.

Not an enemy, but an ally; not an unwilling servant, but a loyal, grateful, dutiful son; not a felon, but a prince; not a man oppressed with fear and foreboding, but a man pervaded, at intervals at least, even already, with inward peace, and looking for a triumph which the earth cannot parallel, which the earth has not room for; —so stands the Christian before his God; redeemed by the cross; renewed by the Spirit; accepted through grace; more than peer of the angels! And life is his, and death, and immortality! The Universe is his who is thus affiliated to Him who made it. Nothing can really oppress or harm him; but all things shall work, actively and together, to do him good. The forces of the creation, which all are plastic to God's ordaining and governing mind, shall fly to bless the man who loves him!

And this shall be for no limited term. As long as the throne of the Infinite shall stand, the accepted and reconciled immortal must abide, in honor and in peace! The blow of malice which reaches him, to do him a real and permanent mischief, must first have evaded the vigilance of Omniscience, or broken through the guards

of Omnipotence itself. That man hath no more cause to fear; and he may know that every hope, though multiplied to tenfold greatness, shall be surpassed, as well as answered, amid the Future!

So plain is the act, so vast the result, so infinite the privilege, so instant, constant, imperative the duty, of exercising faith in the Son of God! that faith which says "I believe," and then worships! that faith which carries every soul into prompt and glad submission to Him, and thereafter determines the character and the life by a new, a higher, a spiritual law! This faith is God's most plain, and just, and necessary requirement. It is as well man's noblest privilege. It hath all goodness and heroism prophesied in it. It brings all glory in its train. It is the condition of the Life Everlasting!

My friends, what can I further say, save only to repeat in your hearing to-day those words of Paul: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD!" Especially would I urge this single, definite, memorable lesson on those before me who never yet have acknowledged Christ, and never have felt true faith in him; who know not the joy of a personal consecration to this great Saviour and King of men; who live as the world lives, amused with its pleasures, engrossed in its pursuits; and who confess, to others at least, and perhaps to themselves, no higher want.

My friends, remember a moment what God is! Let a flash of his glory strike through the habitual indifference of your minds, and think of him as he is; so vast in power,—so great in wisdom, so immeasurable and infinite in the glory of his being; encompassing you at every instant, and having eternity for the span of his supremacy! Think how kindness and goodness unite with power in all his action; how the universe glows

with his Divine brightness! You admire the form and the tint of the flower. It is God who hath fashioned it, and touched it with its color. You marvel at the speed and the size of the star, swinging silent through the azure, completing the stupendous choir of the worlds. It is God who hath created it, and who now carries forward its every movement. You cannot but be touched by the majesty and the beauty of the words of inspiration. It is God who hath suggested them, to the minds of his prophets; and only the reflection of his divine wisdom is darkly hinted in grandest Scriptures! You think of angels, and higher beings, with wonder, awe, and almost fear. But still above them all, unsearchable, arises God; and none of them approximates his glory.

On every hand He lives around us. In every force, and form, and law, his mind is seen. And through all worlds, that march above, his presence is, instant as here; and through all ages that shall come, his power, his knowledge, his wisdom, and his grace shall stand unchanged! Perfect in goodness, perfect in wisdom, his character is the real glory of the universe, as his life is its force, and his power its support!

To be then truly affiliated to Him—this is the grandest good of man; the grandest good of any of his creatures. No thoughtful man can fail to feel it. The soul, with central, incessant yearning, demands this good! And when we have been alienated from him, we must be "reconciled," be reconciled through Christ, or we cannot attain this. Then fear is ours; and pain, and gloom, and hell itself, with its untold array of terrors! But if we are in heart his children, then heaven and all its joys are ours; a state within us, before they are shown a city above; a life in the soul, and then a crown on the spiritual body! And immortality shall bring to them no loss or term!

Oh, then, to you, to YOU, I say, "Be ye, this day, each one and all—by faith in Christ, and that intelligent, noble submission, which this implies—be reconciled to God!" You are not now; you know you are not. That dark unrest which lurks within, proves that you are not. Each motion of your conscience declares you are not. Your love of the world is proof that you are not. That fear of death which now and then makes you to shiver, is a vivid and present demonstration of the fact! Be reconciled to him. It is not righteousness only that urges it. It is the simplest, plainest prudence. For save you are, there is for you on earth no hope, and in the future no scene of safety! The air above looks clear and bright; but lightning and the blast are slumbering in it! You see no visible, palpable glooms lifting their pillars athwart the future; but already those glooms are rising and darkening within your own soul, which shall hereafter become bars of perdition, and destinies of doom, except you make your peace with God!

Oh, turn and live! Obey, believe, and do Christ's will! Become a child, an heir of God! accepted of him, through the Son! lifted to inward sympathy with him, through that influence of his Spirit which sanctifies the heart!—or that steep grave which yawns before you shall open as you enter it, into the very abyss of darkness; and your eternity be one vast Night!

From every page of nature as of Scripture; from every day-break blushing with its beauty, and every night-fall that shows the infinite cope above throbbing to brightness with its quick stars; from a past all restless with painful search; from a future whose experience we now and here each hour determine; from the soul that never is born as it should be, till born into true relations to God; from Sabbaths and from death-beds; from the cross and the ascension; from heaven, that

rings with that great jubilee, the echo of which rolls swiftly on us through the harps of the Apocalypse, and the mystery of which our highest raptures here foreshadow; from hell, that heaves as Christ portrays it, and ceaselessly tosses, in the gloom of God's frown;—from each alike, from all combined, comes up this constant, appealing cry: "Ye men whom God hath made immortal, and who by sin are parted from him, be ye this hour, by faith in Christ, through his sacrifice and his Spirit, RECONCILED TO GOD!"

God, by his grace, bless to each one the urgent lesson, and make it indeed to all of us a message from the skies: and unto Him be all the praise!

XVI.

THE ANCIENT WORTHIES OUR EXAMPLE.

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That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.—Heb. vi. 12.

The principle of imitation is one of the strongest and most prevalent of all those that influence mankind. Almost from the first lighting up of intelligence, the infant begins his education by copying the motions and gestures of those around him; and it is pleasant and instructive to notice how from day to day the little scholar quickens his perceptions, enlarges the range of his observations, and becomes more and more skillful and perfect in his mimic arts. The motions of the body and the expressions of the countenance are formed, the organs of speech are brought into action, the tones of the voice, the acquisition of language, nay, the general modes of thought and utterance flow very much from imitation of those with whom the young associate and whom they admire. In a very great measure the operation of this one principle produces those striking resemblances we so commonly observe between parents and their children, companions and friends.

In after-life the same law prevails. While there may be some natural peculiarity of mind or disposition which makes the individual particularly susceptible of

certain impressions rather than of others, yet it is chiefly by imitation that the original propensity is elicited and confirmed. The man of a lively, imaginative mind, in the presence of objects of beauty and sublimity, glows with an excitement to which others are strangers; but it is by the study of the masters of the poetic art that he at length acquires the power to clothe his emotions in a graceful vesture of numbers, and make his thoughts immortal in "words that burn." Nature endows the orator with gifts, and enkindles the Promethean fire; but much labor and a careful observation of the masters of resistless eloquence who have already attained skill and eminence, alone can bring his gifts to perfection. And so it is through the entire web of society. The multitude live on the humble follower of the modes and customs that rule around. And even the men of genius, the fine spirits that are "turned to fine issues," are not altogether formed by independent, solitary musings; but taking advantage of the labors of those who have gone before, and having ambition and hope aroused by their successes, they set themselves to copy, to equal, and then to excel the objects of their admiration. And thus by a reverent imitation and generous rivalry are high characters formed and great ends achieved. To this efficacious principle the apostle directs his readers in the language of our text. The noblest doctrines had been inculcated upon them through the sacred Word, but they could become valuable only as they should be reduced to practice: pure and sublime precepts were enforced, but to be of any advantage to themselves or others they must become manifest in their lives. That they were not impracticable requirements, appeared in the fact that multitudes in former ages had actually illustrated them in their daily conversation. They had lived as under

the eye of the Great Invisible; they had believed the word of his promise; they had anticipated the fulfillment with great delight, and had framed their thoughts and actions in conformity with the principles and hopes thus imparted to them. And they had at length realized all their expectations. Let their example, then, awaken emulation. Imitate their heroic characters and magnanimous acts. Draw from their success motives to diligence in the race that is set before you: "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience (even now) inherit the promises."

To aid our minds in comprehending Paul's exhortation and converting it to our personal benefit, let us notice,

I. The end these illustrious worthies attained who are set forth as examples for our imitation.

II. The means they adopted and perseveringly applied.

III. The summons to follow their virtues, that we may achieve their triumph.

I. THE END ATTAINED BY THOSE WHOSE EXAMPLES ARE PRESENTED FOR OUR IMITATION.

Having expounded the great truths respecting Christ's person and his priestly office in the preceding part of the epistle, the apostle in this chapter turns his doctrine, as was usual with him, to practical uses. And the special point he urges, is that the Hebrew converts should watch against defection, and persevere in their Christian calling. The principles they had imbibed they should carry to perfection; the holiness they had professed they should exemplify in consistent practice. They should be aware of the danger of entertaining false hopes, and should look carefully to the traitor within, and guard themselves against the many allurements of the world without. They should both sift and settle their principles, and inflame their zeal by the steady

contemplation of those bright instances of the faith and patience of such as had been sorely tried and had proved successful.

He refers more directly, no doubt, to those Old Testament worthies, of whose names and deeds he gives so splendid a catalogue in a subsequent chapter. But the exhortation was intended to be of permanent use and application. It has relation to the examples of all believers, of every age, who, by the same means, have attained the like triumphs and rewards. They are described under the twofold ideas of—*the end* at which they aimed, "*they inherit the promises;*" and the means by which they achieved their bliss, "*through faith and patience.*"

They "INHERIT THE PROMISES." As spoken of the ancient saints, it was a consummated joy. They had finished the course; they had reached the goal; they had received the victor's crown that fadeth not away; they had actually become possessed of the things promised, and were enjoying the serenity and repose which await every good soldier in this cause.

The promises, however, were not more theirs, Paul intimates, than ours. There were certain promises, indeed, which were peculiar to Israel under the ancient economy; for that dispensation, for a large part, contemplated temporal benefits, and such promises were fulfilled in their release from Egypt and introduction into the earthly Canaan. And every Jew participated in those civil and social immunities his nation enjoyed by virtue of these promises. Yet many of them had a wider range than the bestowment of mere temporal and carnal blessings, and were only accomplished, in their full import, in the attainment of spiritual and everlasting good things. Even Israel was a type of the New Testament Church, the true spiritual seed; the march

through the wilderness, with its trials and succors, was a type of the condition of saints in the world; and Canaan itself was a type of the heavenly rest. And the promises then, as now, had respect to the several parts of this pilgrimage as well as to its blissful termination.

We know that God gave them promises of guidance and support during the journey, and miracles were wrought in fulfillment of these divine pledges. The heavens dropped manna, and the flinty rocks gushed out with living streams; their enemies were drowned, and the walls of beleagured cities fell down, to prove the power and fidelity of Israel's God. Nor did the supply cease, nor was the overruling hand withdrawn, until, after forty years wanderings to punish their rebellious spirit, God's mercy again appeared, their feet trod the dry channel of Jordan, and they went in to possess the land. He led them, and fed them, and instructed them in that dreary march. So is it with the Christian. All needful grace is promised for his earthly sojourn. Temporal provision and care are included in the generous grant; for it is said: "Bread shall be given, and water shall be sure." God's hand shall be outstretched for his protection and supply; and though the grace of faith may be often tried by delay, and of submission, by other answers to prayers than those we may desire, yet the word upon which the saint relies for his temporal blessings, will never be forfeited. "I have been young," saith David, "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Eminently, however, do the promises cover our spiritual wants. "Grace for every time of need," is the ample proffer. The young convert speedily finds that his religious life is not an uninterrupted course of ease and enjoyment; but that the figures, under which it is represented in Scripture, are appropriate and emphatic.

It is a conflict, a race, a warfare, in which "we wrestle not against flesh and blood," outward and discovered foes; "but against principalities and powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The former he might subdue, their attack he might foresee and repel. But these latter are partly inward; our own wandering thoughts, carnal appetites and passions, the force of long confirmed habits of self-indulgence and sin; and they are partly those of invisible spiritual existences, of whose being the Bible gives us descriptions, and the believer has ample experience. "Satan goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and the attacks of these assailants are continued through life, with diminishing power, it may be, but, while we are in the flesh, never are our enemies utterly destroyed. There is no perfection, no finished victory, while we are in the body. "Without are fightings, and within are fears." Nor is any saint exempt; the most eminent are frequently the most tried, and through tribulation they enter into rest. The possibility of sin, the actual indwelling of corrupt affections, is the state of every child of God, until his spirit is completely emancipated, and the corruptible is laid away in the earth to await the summons to rise and put on incorruption. Under all these different states of mind, however, and amidst all the conflicts we may meet, there are gracious promises, adapted to soothe and support the fainting spirit. "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy," cries the timid believer. "Fear not," saith the promise, "for I am with thee." "All these things are against me," exclaims the buffeted soul; "I am God, all sufficient," saith the promise; "thy God and thine exceeding great reward. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when

thou goest through the flames they shall not kindle upon thee;" "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." How often, in Christian experience, have the darkest forebodings been dispelled, and some unlooked for interventions of Providence removed all our fears, and smoothed our way, at the anticipated moment of trial and disaster. How often, when the pursuing host was upon us, and the mountains reared their rocky ramparts on each hand, and the sea was before, and no escape seemed possible, has there been a moving of the waters, and we have passed safely, as on dry land: and, perhaps, brethren, on the shore we sang God's praises in momentary gratitude, but like Israel, we soon forgot his works. Yet, whatever be our derelictions, "God is faithful, he cannot deny himself." No doubt we all shall find personal reason, both for gratitude and humiliation, in this respect. Our past lives will afford us, oh, how many attestations to the gentle care, and unswerving faithfulness of our kind Redeemer, and many, many causes for deep contrition over our thoughtless disregard of his rebukes and neglect of his goodness. God's forbearance and our perverseness stand often in startling contrast, to shame us and magnify the riches of his grace.

But the end of the course is secured. Every believer in Jesus Christ is an heir of heaven by a divine promise; and that promise is confirmed to him by the veracity, and consistency, and power of the promiser. The experiences of our daily life, the preservation of divine grace in our hearts amidst so much within and without, so diametrically opposed to its existence and growth, the present continuance of spiritual affections and hope, are pledges and earnests of our "inheritance in light. "He who hath begun a good work will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ." It was a part of the Saviour's blessed

valedictory—"I go to prepare a place for you; and I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." By the law of the kingdom, we here must have tribulation. At the best, our earthly pilgrimage is a scene of mingled light and shade: drafts of sweetness are dashed with many an infusion of the wormwood and the gall; nor is there any living exemption by the fixed law of humanity, this life of agitation and care tends towards a death of pain, and ends at last in the abhorred and lonely grave. There all earthly sorrows cease indeed, and the weary are at rest; but there too, whatever earthly joys we have known are forever ended. No living voice wakes the echoes of the tomb; no form of beauty greets the sight; no assiduities of friend or loved one ever soothe the rugged couch. And from the teachings of nature we derive no assurance of a future resurrection; nay, all the accessories of the condition seem to set there the seal of unbroken continuance, eternal desolation. To the eye of reason, no ray of hope casts a glimmer into the Cimmerian gloom of the narrow house. If we were left to her instructions alone, oh, how dreary our prospects, and what an awful gloom would be reflected upon our present state! In the utter prostration of our spirits, without adequate motive for exertion, and without prospect or hope of a fitting sphere in which to exert the powers with which we are endowed, we should give vent, in David's complaint, to irrepressible murmurs: "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain." Reason here is dumb. But hark! the word of the promise speaks from the revelations of God. My spirit revives as I hear its tones of triumph chanted over the new-made grave—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live." My soul leaps in ecstasy when I read

these assurances of my Saviour—when my faith can seize and hold them fast, as the succor and strength of my weary heart. I love to muse upon what he says of the New Jerusalem; its pearly gates, its golden streets, its many mansions; the palace of its King; the bright forms of its inhabitants, clothed in white; the Lamb in the midst of the throne; the infinite Father and his myriads of angels; the harps and hallelujahs of its countless choir, and the ever-during cycles of their bliss. I love to revive in my memory those images of grandeur and of glory by which the Spirit strives to excite within us some faint conception of that scene of the Redeemer's final triumph, the saints' final bliss, God's closing and crowning act in the process of creation, and providence, and grace, when he shall make all things new. I love to imagine what heaven will be; with an ardor even more animated than that which Old Testament saints could have experienced, to trace out those descriptions which inspiration has laboriously wrought; to rehearse those great and precious promises by which it is made over to a humble, world-subduing, soul-exalting faith. Yes, and there are times when the promise seems so sure, the image so vividly portrayed, heaven so near, that the reality is almost begun below. There seems to be a looking in at those doors; a hearing of that everlasting song; a sight of things within the vale which is unearthly, and sometimes overbears the frail house of clay. Saints have known such joy—the promise even here almost fulfilled in experience—absolutely fulfilled in its certainty. Faith was well-nigh lost in vision. In the fruition they have been so borne away from earth as to say with aged Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Paul's experience was eminent, it is true, but hardly his alone of all Christ's saints. Others too, in

experience of things not seen, have come to the Mount Zion, and have had such foretastes, as at times almost to fulfill the promise, by bringing heaven very near to the soul, and making it an almost realized bliss.

II. LET US PASS TO SPEAK OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE OBJECTS ARE ATTAINED. Paul teaches us that they are subjects of "promise;" yet not to our merit, but are all of grace. They are, too, like the possessions of an heir, not procured by his own exertions, but "inherited" through the favor and by the will of the donor. Still there are certain prerequisites by which our title will be authenticated—certain graces which, however, are not so properly causes producing effects—means insuring an end by their inherent power—as divinely appointed antecedents, which our gracious Master himself works within us, and to which he condescends to annex the blessing. So that, though the human and divine co-operate, still it is all of grace.

The ancient worthies here commemorated inherited the things promised—"through faith and patience." By the same graces must we be governed, that we may secure the fulfillment of the New Testament promises—the objects of our desire and hope. Now, "FAITH" in this connection, does not denote merely a persuasion of the being and perfections of the one living and true God, and a confident reliance upon his goodness in his general providence; for that is a faith that might exist and be active without any such knowledge of his character or relations to us as is given in the Bible. Indeed, such a faith would be quite consistent with the deist's belief in one God, and disbelief of every thing peculiar to the Scriptural revelation of the only true God, and Jesus Christ his Son. It is faith in the God of the Bible—in God as he shines in the face of Jesus his anointed; faith in his revealed method of redemption—

in the mediation he has made known—in the sole merit of the atonement for pardon and life; faith in his power to subdue our sins in us, as he has made satisfaction to the law for us; in his ability and willingness to do for us all that we need to fit us for heaven, and to bring us there. Yet it is not a mere speculative assent to such ideas, nor even to certain propositions laid down in Scripture concerning the peculiar character, mission, life, and death of Jesus Christ; but it is a personal *reliance* upon him as he is thus revealed to us. It is not an operation of the intellect merely, although the mind must be first correctly informed. But gospel faith is mainly an exercise of the heart, receiving, resting in, loving this Saviour; personally trusting him for the salvation he has revealed and we absolutely need. You know that very much is made of this principle in the New Testament. It is represented as the very life of the Christian in this world. He "lives the life of faith upon the Son of God." It pervades his whole being. By it the true relations between things temporal and spiritual, between the present and the future, the favor of God and "the pleasures of sin for a season," this short life and an eternal heaven, are clearly defined, and placed in their just magnitude and order. Faith becomes "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." The mind under its influence apprehends the certain existence and attainable blessedness of those distant objects, and then the soul is excited to strive after them. Faith holds to the promise of those pleasures at God's right hand, and we cheerfully deny ourselves, and take our cross to follow him. It draws motives of action from the invisible and future world which counterbalance all the allurements of time; which arm us with resolution to disregard the light afflictions of the present moment, and even to spurn

earthly blandishments when they come into competition with the glory to be revealed. Faith relies upon the Saviour to do for us what we may need; and then it faces every trial, and has no fear. Death and the grave are conquered foes; it looks beyond the long ages to the general rising of all the myriads of earth's sons; to the meeting of the Lord in the air, and going to be with him in the mansions he has gone to prepare for them that love him. No principle like this to disenchant the world, and to impart a courage before which the common objects of human dread or allurement are powerless, and the common incentives and aims of human ambition sink into contempt.

AGAIN, the "PATIENCE" here enjoined is properly something more than mere quiet endurance of present troubles, which is the usual idea affixed to that word. The original term, rather, means such a sedate, composed and resolute mind as shall qualify us to bear up under long-continued trials, a series of disasters, subduing afflictions, and yet to persevere in the faithful maintenance of our principles, and the fearless discharge of duty. The two things are frequently thus distinguished in Scripture: as where we are enjoined to practise "long-suffering and patience." It implies the power not merely of passive endurance, which is indeed a Christian grace of high renown, but of active, and onward movement wherever our Master requires we should go; whatever obstacles or dangers may line the way. In opposition to a timid or slothful spirit, we are commanded to be diligent, fearless, and energetic, trusting in God to bring us safely through when we proceed from regard to his will, and our object is to promote his glory. The Old Testament furnished many examples of these graces. Noah being warned of God, believed, and "prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

Abraham submitted to the sacrifice of kindred and country; he withheld not the knife from Isaac, that he might obey the heavenly mandate: in that terrible trial of paternal love his faith still grasped the promise, and he became thereby the Father of all them that believe. Moses turned his back upon the pomps of royalty to cast in his lot with the despised Hebrew race, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward. In the early times of the New Dispensation, apostles and martyrs exemplified the virtue of these same principles, when they willingly gave themselves to the dungeon and the stake, "not accepting deliverance," that they might attain a better life, an enduring substance. And in later ages, God in his providence has subjected the faith and patience of his people to equal trials, and in like manner they have produced miracles of heroism in ten thousands of instances. The test has proved the spirit to be the same in purity and vigor. There is not a country, hardly a spot in Europe, that has not been reddened with the blood of those who have been slain for the testimony of Jesus. Their lives of self-denial and toil, their dungeon hours of enduring patience, their expiring moments of torture and of hope, and of ecstasy often, attested that a Christian's faith was something more than speculation, something more than mere enthusiasm, something more than a distempered dream; that it in reality took hold on God and God's throne, and the soul was lifted up thereby above all fears and affections, above all earthly sensibilities, to a sublimity of endurance which only the living power of the world to come, the inwrought experience of Christ's grace, could give them to experience or can make us understand. I have wandered amidst the magnificent ruins of Rome, the palaces of the Cæsars, the Coliseum, the columns and arches of ancient struc-

tures more imposing than the grandeur of the modern city, and my thoughts turned back to the days of the primitive Christian church in that ancient seat of universal empire. We are told that a vast multitude of men and women were there converted to the faith of Jesus while yet the gospel was preached by apostolic men and had not lost its early power. And there that Pagan Rome, that had adopted the gods of all the conquered nations, could make no room in her Pantheon for Jesus the Nazarene, and could tolerate none of his disciples amidst the motley throng of idolatrous votaries. Fit was it it should be so. They were hurried to the wild beasts, burned in garments impregnated with inflammable materials, exposed to tortures which, cruel as they were, might be taken as first lessons in the accursed art which, in after ages, and in almost every country, the inventive fanaticism of Papal Rome refined to such diabolical perfection. And there, it is said, Christianity, hunted from the habitations of men, sought shelter beneath the ground, and dug out a city of churches and tombs; and Christ's disciples fled thither to practise the rites of a pure worship, and indulge the affections of renewed minds. As I descended the vault-like mouth for a short distance into the Catacombs, a tumult of emotion overwhelmed me. It was as if a voice commanded, "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Imagination held me captive. I tried to read the almost obliterated inscription, and peered away into the darkness to descry, if possible, the Cryptic chapel and the form of some poor Christian exercising his forbidden devotions in the very bowels of the earth. I could not but ask myself, what power could have so disenchanted this world, to men and women of nothing more than the ordinary mould? What spirit was it that, amidst such

privations, so transformed and sustained, and even cheered, these primitive sufferers, in their voluntary adherence to a despised and persecuted creed? And I could only reply, that "the love of Christ constrained them." These were the first trophies of that simple but sublime principle which should strew the world at once with its victims and its victories; which should save many lost souls; which should silently work on until it should revolutionize the entire social and civil condition of men: at whose bidding the missionary should part from country and kindred, and the martyr should die, assured that the truths he preached, the principles he watered with his blood, should be the seed of a bounteous harvest: the principle which should bring a latter day of peace, purity, and hope, on the earth, when the idols should be utterly abolished, and should replenish heaven with the myriads of the ransomed of all climes, and classes, and characters, and times, who shall stand before the throne clothed in white, for that they are worthy. Here was the first going forth of its power, and even then, we are told, the heathen oracles suddenly became significantly dumb.

I afterwards roamed over Alpine hills and the indescribable grandeur of the scenery elevated and awed my spirit. But again my thoughts fled back to those Waldensians who through the sluggish years of the Papal degeneracy were true to their trust. While all civilized Europe slumbered under the spell of ceremonial superstition, or "worshipped stocks and stones," they kept pure and bright the lamp of Christian faith; and they suffered, oh, what cruelties from the hands of anti-christian Rome, against whose power those mountain fastnesses afforded no protection, from whose terrific crags they "rolled mother with infant down the rocks." From other places, memorable also in the records of the

Christian martyrology, I came to France and stood in the heart of that beautiful capital where pomp and worldly gaiety and crime hold a perpetual carnival. The most gorgeous public show my eye ever beheld, just then took place; but amidst the festivities of the season, I could not but look back two centuries and a half, when in the same place were enacted the horrors of Saint Bartholomew's eve; and tens of thousands of faithful Huguenots were miserably butchered to glut the rage of the dominant party, and extirpate, if possible, the very roots and fibres of Huguenot piety. And again my wanderings led me to that Oxford, dear to learning, and dear, too, to Protestant Christianity; and on the spot where Latimer and Ridley burned, my footsteps paused. It required no effort of imagination to recall the past. The scene rose life-like before me. I seemed to hear the words of stout-hearted old Latimer, whose spirit a torturing death could not repress: "Fear nothing, brother Ridley; we shall this day kindle a fire in England that by God's grace shall never go out." And noble Ridley, too, I seemed to hear crying, "Oh! the flames do not come to me; will none stir the fire?" when the green fagots did slowly their cruel office, and only the powder tied about him, at length ended his tortures. I thought of Smithfield and the days of bloody Mary; of the great cloud of Reformation martyrs in Bohemia, and Holland, and Spain, and their holy witnessings for the truth as it is in Jesus. And when I pondered the great facts of their history, I could not but ask again, where was the motive, what principle was it that could inspire not one, nor a few enthusiasts, but multitudes of different places and education, of different social position and habits, to do violence to nature's rooted affections and spurn the world's allurements, and refuse deliverance when it was offered, if only they would

renounce their Christian profession. Such scenes disclosed the force of Christian principle, and I could not but see that the New Testament, as well as the Old, has its array of confessors; that they, too, this host of modern martyrs, "through faith and patience inherit the promises." Promised grace was given to support them in fearful straits; and heaven threw wide its everlasting doors to receive their ascending spirits. Here truly was the patience and the victory of the saints.

III. I call your attention to the EXHORTATION of the Apostle: "Be not slothful, but followers." Such instances, in former and later times, were exhibited in Providence, to show what power there is in the principles and spirit of the gospel; and they are examples intended for our encouragement and imitation, as circumstances shall demand. We may learn from them that nothing in the way of affliction is likely to happen unto us, greater than others have been carried through. Our trials will almost certainly be small indeed, compared with theirs; with what multitudes of untaught men, and feeble women, have met in other days. Why then should we shrink, or murmur? We shall not, in human probability, be subjected to such extremes of suffering as many of them endured. Blessed be God, the times are changed, if not the dispositions of men, and literal martyrdom is not the call of the age. Yet, brethren, each of us shall have trials to meet on our way to the promised rest. It is the law by which, in common life, energy and endurance are produced. And, in the spiritual economy, our "faith and patience," and the various graces of the new creation, must be drawn forth and corroborated, and made useful by opposition and exercise. Each scene of social or business activity, every relation and enjoyment, may become the place

and cause of trial. Our tempers, our love to divine things, the prevalence of devout or carnal affections, of worldliness or spirituality, are best proved by this exposure to the operation of daily and hourly influences around. Though often hardly perceptible, they do not the less decisively show "what manner of spirit we are of." And I am inclined to think, that what are regarded as the smaller trials of every-day life are a much more reasonable, and expressive test of our piety than many splendid acts of observed and admired Christian heroism. There are natural as well as promised supports to the latter, which the former want; and, at the best, single, though glorious acts are less indicative of character than the spirit we display in the daily conversation of years. And I imagine, also, that the ease with which a Christian profession may now be taken up, and a creditable Christian standing maintained, may tend to weaken and undermine that vigor of religious principle which the exposed circumstances of confessors, their liability, at any moment, to be called to seal their profession with life itself, would naturally confirm. It may be more difficult to rule one's spirit, than to fashion outward conduct; more difficult, certainly, to turn off the eye from the world, amidst the blandishments of wealth, and ease, and reputation, and standing among our fellow-men, than if we should be made "the offscouring of all things." We may be seduced to forget those distant glories, to remit our watchfulness, and so, in a measure, forego our preparation, and dim the lustre of the crown, when there is so little call, apparently, for "faith and patience." Therefore, keep in sight the grand reward; consider, more earnestly, "the end of your faith, the salvation of your soul;" meditate much upon the nature, and the blessedness of heaven; try to inflame your desires; to attune your voices for its melo-

dious concert; to attire your spirits for its companionship; to plume your wings for flight. As days, and months, and years roll on, become more wakeful for the summons, and stand ready to go when called. We follow a goodly company. From the grey dawn of time to this moment they have marched, in compact ranks, to "the glory in reserve;" in the world, but not of the world. They have struggled through narrow defiles, over rugged ways, amidst exposure and conflicts; enduring a great fight of affliction, yet onward and upward. For a moment their line is broken, and we lose sight of the moving host, as they pass down through the river of death. But anon the column is advanced to the heights above; the standard of the Captain of their salvation floats in triumph over the walls of the celestial city; and see, see, from the battlements, their waving hands, and radiant forms, and exultant gestures encourage our fainting hearts, and beckon us on to the mount of victory on which they stand. Patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs are there; saints of all ages and climes; your own friends departed in Christ, there they are, and there they wait to welcome you. Oh! what a meeting, and what a greeting will that be, when, all our toils ended, the conflict over, the struggle of "faith and patience" shall be forgotten amidst the gratulations and glories of the rest above. Up, Christian; up, young convert; think of the triumph; think of those already saved, "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Yes! yes! we will follow, God helping. We will meet the self-denying hour; we will toil up the steep ascent, bearing our cross; and "our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

The subject is well adapted, both to incite and en-

courage the Christian. It brings into view his dangers and hopes; the great and constant necessity there is for watchfulness, and diligence, and self-denying exertion, and the consolation springing from the gracious promises of his Saviour that his labors shall not be in vain. He is called to serve his Master by a life of devout affections and active usefulness; to serve him by inward graces of humility, and meekness, and gentleness, and purity, and self-denial, and by the outward practice of whatsoever things are true, and honest, and of good report: to receive into his mind, to cultivate in his soul, and to carry out into daily exemplification that system of transcendent doctrine, of sublime morality, of sustained beneficence, which the New Testament inculcates. While, to animate his heart, he has the great and precious promises, a bright reserve of glory to be revealed, and the holy lives and triumphant deaths of many believers, who have passed this way before and left their testimony to the truth of the Saviour's word and the efficacy of the grace he imparts to his followers. Let the trials by the way, then, be counted light by us, brethren, while we hasten to the coming of the Lord. Let not sloth retard; see that the grace within is ever active and growing. "If ye do these things ye shall never fail; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Finally: the young convert and the inquirer may be instructed from our theme. They may learn from it the true nature of the service to which they are invited, and the grounds of encouragement they have to enter it. Religion is not a profession merely, but imposes duties and demands vigorous effort to prosecute it successfully to the end. It is of the heart first; an inward power

which moulds the emotions and volitions of the mind to its own elevated standard of purity; and then it shows itself infallibly in the life, directing its purposes and aims so as best to promote the true dignity and happiness of the individual himself, and to become a salient spring that shall pour streams of goodness on all around. Any other, or lower idea of religion than this; any notion that because it is respectable, or will insure our safety, we must submit to its requisitions; that we will accept its restraints, that we may be sure of its rewards; anything short of a loving heart, and an obedient, useful life, will be of no avail. But such a purpose once formed at the call of Christ, the future will be blessed, whatever present trials we may experience, or our Christian profession may involve. For from that moment we become heirs of "the inheritance of saints in light." All present consolations equally with those prospective glories become ours. The Saviour condescends to receive us into his family, and treat us as his children. He will supply all our needs according to the riches of his grace. In humble dependence upon his promised aid we may travel on through our pilgrimage; nor need we fear want or foe. His promise will make even the patriarch's stony pillow soothing to our heads; and a widow's cruse an inexhaustible provision. The dark night of sorrow shall be cheered with songs; and through our whole way his rod and his staff shall support us. When we reach the confines of Canaan, the angels of the country shall stand ready, the Lord's host, to conduct us safely over Jordan into the rest which he hath spoken to us of. There our wanderings shall for ever cease; we shall come to the fellowship of that noble army we followed below; we shall enter the gates of that city whose walls are adamant, whose streets are paved with fine gold, which hath no need of the sun

to light it, for the Lamb is the light thereof; where the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell there shall be forgiven their iniquities.

There all the divine purposes shall be unfolded, the darkness of Providence dispelled, the mysteries of grace solved. We shall look back without a murmur or regret upon the events of our passage through the world: around with satisfaction upon the place, its companionship and occupations; and onward with ineffable delight through the cycles of its joy. We shall adore a faithful Saviour, and confess of the leadings of his hand that "he hath done all things well."

XVII.

INCENTIVES TO SEEK COMPANIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL.

BY J. KENNADAY, D.D.

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We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.—NUMBERS x. 29.

In almost every portion of Scripture which refers to Moses, there is much of interest and instruction. From the period of so much anxiety to his mother and sister, when they placed him in the frail ark "in the flags by the river's brink," until he terminated his pilgrimage upon the summit of Mount Nebo, his entire life was most eventful. Selected to be the guide of an oppressed people, to mould the institutions of their civil and ecclesiastical polity, and honored in being an illustrious type of that prophet which God was to raise up from among the Jews, his life, in many of its features, exemplified the power of religion in the formation of character, while his teachings elucidate the righteousness of the divine government.

True character is frequently developed in tender and delicate incidents, no less than in more imposing acts. It is in this that the transaction here narrated acquires its greatest interest. It was not an event of great public concernment so much as of private interest. It was an act of kindness in which the party evincing it allowed

not the high things of his official position to deter him from attending to the humbler, but no less important duties resulting from social relations. The first year of the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness had expired, and the tribes, gathering under their respective standards, were watching the moving of the rising cloud, when Moses, amid the accumulated interests of the solemn hour, addressed the language of the text to Hobab, his brother-in-law. The passage is strongly indicative of true religious character, and worthy of our best religious reflection. In its consideration we shall notice—

I. The character by which he designates the people of God.

II. His anxiety that others should share in their happiness.

I. The character by which he designates the people of God.

1. *They were a journeying people.* But a little while before, they were restrained from this journey by the oppressions they suffered in the house of bondage. Their struggles were feeble compared with the power of their adversaries, and their servitude was humiliating and painful. He whose strength is made "perfect in weakness," regarded their sighs, and with an arm more powerful than that of Pharaoh, he brought them into a liberty in which they ascribed "greatness unto God."

Such, even now, is the character of the Church. "Delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son," it sings the song of the Lamb, as the children of Israel chaunted the song of Moses. "Being made free from sin, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Happy the people who share this blessed liberation.

Once carnal, and "sold under sin," "their cry came up unto God, by reason of the bondage." The great deliverer came, saying, "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Chosen out of the world, the Church obeys the voice of him who says, "this is not thy rest, it is polluted." "Rise, let us go hence." Whatever may be the inconveniences, the trials and sufferings of the people of God in the wilderness, their position is far in advance of their former condition.

2. *They were not yet in the land of rest.* A state of probation necessarily involves trial. The enjoyments of heaven will consist largely in the consummation of graces which had their beginning and training upon earth. The warfare is here. Earth is the battle-place which shall test the temper of the weapons of warfare, and the energy of the hand that wields them. The trials incident to a religious life are intended to teach the followers of God that they must set their "affections upon things above, not on things on the earth," and to convince them that "all chastening is designed to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no." In this journeying state of Israel we see the estimate we should still form of the Church. Redeemed from the corruptions and darkness of her former state, and yet not fully entered into the high privileges of her promised heaven, she surveys with exultation the deliverances of the past, and, animated by a humble faith, she journeys onward in prospect of the future. This character of the Church, midway between the house of her bondage and the land of repose, is too often forgotten by those who look upon the tabernacles of the righteous. The Church must not now be compared with

that Church which in its glorified state shall be presented to the eternal King in all the chaste and exalted attributes of her final redemption; she is yet in the wilderness. But comparing her with her former captivity, she now "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Thus the Church moves onward to her glorious and destined place of promise. To discern the true character of Christians, the world must judge them as not yet "glorified." Consider their former servitude, their unprofitableness, their unfruitfulness, and you will find in them a virtue as superior to their former state as it is wanting in the perfections of heaven. The cares attaching to the life that now is, must necessarily engage a portion of every Christian's attention. In his devotion to these, his own proneness to err, and the misapprehension of others, will often lead many to wonder at his many deviations, and even to question the genuineness of his profession. Were men of the world more generally to take this view of the Church, they would see less at which to be offended.

> "He who does best his circumstance allows,
> Acts well, does nobly—angels can no more."

3. *They believed in the rest which was promised them.* The place promised to Abraham and his people so frequently, is referred to as an emblem of heaven. Such is particularly the reference of St. Paul, "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." "Whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know." "In my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." A future state of existence is a subject of almost universal belief, though to the Pagan world a subject of much obscurity. However dark the features of religion in the heathen world, yet all systems

teach a future of rewards and retributions. Obscure and conflicting as their theories may be, ofttimes even grossly absurd, still some trace of this belief everywhere is found. Whether this sentiment comes from tradition, or whether "it is the divinity that stirs within us," it is to be respected. But while all others walk in uncertainty upon this great subject, the Christian has "life and immortality brought to light in the gospel of Christ. Like the "pillar of cloud," the Scriptures "shine as a light in a dark place." They teach "that God having provided some better thing for us," assures us that to be "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." We journey to that place, says Israel. Following the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth, "we labor to enter into that rest." Our eyes have never looked over its scenes of unmarred beauty, nor have our feet ever trodden its ways of pleasantness, yet our faith and hope have ofttimes brought us fruit of their gathering, and these have been our spies to descry its abundant pleasures. Of that place, the Lord hath said to Israel, "I will give it you;" and they journey in the full belief of its existence, and that amid its resplendent scenes, they shall have rest for evermore.

4. *They were a people to whom God had spoken good.* This avowal illustrates the power of the faith of Moses. Neither the frequent repinings of the people and their instability, nor the hostility of opposing nations, would so move him from his faith in God, as to teach him to distrust the divine benevolence in all the leading of the people. Let Amalek smite. Let Kora revolt. Still God rides upon the heavens in the help of his people, and "all things work good to them who love God." He had chosen to "suffer affliction with the people of God," and he knew that bitter waters, even of a full cup, would sometimes be their portion, but he was

equally assured that evey birtter fount should feel the virtue of the "branch of sweetness." By the power of the faith through which "he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king," he "endured as seeing him who is invisible." Many who are deep in tribulation in this life, shall be nearest the throne in the life to come. Faith, surmounting the trials and sorrows incident to the present state of being, enables them to journey in full assurance that God "has spoken good concerning Israel:"

"God is my strong salvation;
What foe have I to fear?
In darkness and temptation,
My light, my help, is near!
Though hosts encamp around me,
Firm in the fight I stand;
What terror can confound me,
With God at my right hand?"

II. His anxiety that others should share in their happiness.

Solicitude for others is not only commendable as a Christian feeling, but is requisite in every heart desiring the prosperity of the cause of Christ. How any one can claim the character of a follower of God, and feel no ardent desire for the salvation of others, is not a little mysterious. Nor is it alone through a high respect for the honor of God that we should seek to commend religion to the serious attention of others. While this consideration of infinite importance should never be forgotten, we should be mindful that the "common salvation" is promoted by individual instrumentality. The conversion of the sinner from the error of his way "saves a soul from death."

"'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die."

He who makes no effort for the salvation of others, has great reason to distrust his own. This solicitude consists not only in a frequent utterance of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," but in the kind and impressive invitation to those who are "without," to come with the people of God. It was this charity and affection that hurried Andrew, refreshed with the lovely view of the Lamb of God, first to find his brother, Peter, saying, "we have found the Messias." It was this which took the woman from the well of Jacob, to tell the people of Sychar of the purity and refreshing of the waters of the upper spring. It was this that filled Jerusalem with the tidings of the resurrection—brought great joy to the city of Samaria, and gladdened the heart of Barnabas, when, in Antioch, "he saw the grace of God," developed by the efforts of the "men of Cyprus and Cyrene." It was this that led Moses, amid the general and solemn responsibilities of an hour when commanding "the many thousands of Israel," to follow the ark, to feel for a single heart, and to say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

1. The fervor of his solicitude is indicated in its *extent*. That "it is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing," is a maxim to which men yield a ready assent. In the great interests of religion, however, especially in our social relations, our attention is directed to general or ordinary subjects, while the more direct or personal exertions of piety are performed with tardiness, if not wholly neglected. The denomination to which we may be attached, may, through the very force of its numbers, gain accessions, and without much of that coöperation, which individuals may evince in improving the indications of providence and grace, there may be frequent additions to our respective communions. Such prosperity alone should not satisfy the pious heart. As

Naomi said to Ruth, "Where hast thou gleaned to-day, where has thou wrought?" So says the searching voice of the constraining Spirit. Were there more labor in detail, who would estimate the accumulation of prosperity. The immeasurable joys of heaven prevented not its angels from distinct interest in the conversion of a single sinner, when of Saul it was said, "behold he prayeth." Though the twelve tribes, imposing in the number of their "many thousands," were heeding the trumpet which commanded the people to go forward, though these formed the Israel host, yet, in the largeness of his heart, Moses looks upon another—his friend, his relative, an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel—" and to that single heart says, "Come thou, and go with us; we will do thee good." No former prosperity should induce us to withhold present exertion. The great apostle, animated by this solicitude, spent an entire night associated with Silas, to urge the jailer and his house to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Before judges and princes his appeals were made with reference to their personal salvation, forgetful of himself. No man is a greater blessing to a particular church, than the one who, seeking the lost sheep, brings them to the shepherd and bishop of souls. Oh, brethren, let not the success nor delinquency of others induce us to be remiss, but let us seek the spirit of him who says, "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

2. His solicitude was *importunate*. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." What conceptions can a man born blind have of the realizations of light? With all love and patience Ananias must labor until the scales fall from the eyes of Saul. Slow to believe, men require to be instructed in meekness. Even the eagle, with all its after love of the

higher light, is slow at first to trust his mighty wing, and cowers down when urged to soar. No marvel that the soul, allied to the world by every habit and attachment, repels the kind entreaties of piety. Let no Christian be repulsed by denial, nor discouraged by indifference. The entreaty of Moses was decidedly declined by Hobab, who said, "I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred." His heart, so strongly attached to his own country and kindred, was reluctant to seek even the good resulting from union with Israel. Our habits are too strongly formed to be overcome without effort, and our associations are too formidable to be relinquished until our hearts are penetrated by that power by which we may be crucified unto the world. So adverse to the claims of religion are the tendencies of nature, that men generally reject the inducements to a religious life. But no such rejection should dismay the Christian, nor induce him to withhold the "word in season." Had the Saviour become wearied with our denials, who of this assembly would now be sharing the blessings of salvation? Who among us yielded to the earlier calls of grace? Some, perhaps may have regarded the voice of the God of Samuel, and early in life they may have said, "speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." Early in the day some may have entered into the vineyard, but many have loitered until even the eleventh hour. The divine heart yearns over the hardness of the human heart, while God utters the lamentation, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Did Moses relinquish his persuasion, when Hobab said, "I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred." No; but with an importunity, evincing alike his intensity and affection, he said, "Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to

encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us—yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord will do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." Patience is an element of character, which, in any good pursuit, must know no change only to strengthen into determination. Solicitude must become importunate. Knowing the power of truth, and the energy of the spirit which accompanies it, we should never allow our fervor to be quenched by the apparent indifference of those whom we endeavor to persuade to a better course. Some seed will fall by the wayside, some on the rock, and some among thorns, but some may fall upon good ground, and yield an increase, whose fragrance and fruition shall abundantly compensate the toil of those who have borne "the burden and heat of the day." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Successive and vigorous efforts may accomplish what at first seemed difficult, or even doubtful. It is not the first blow of the axe that brings down the stately tree, though each successive appliance may send tremor to the extreme of the highest branch. "He that winneth souls is wise." Whatever repulse our efforts may meet, let us still importune with an affection that surmounts every impediment, and which is ever "mighty through God."

3. *His solicitude was courteous and affectionate in its appeal.* In his appeal, Moses urges two considerations; the first addressed to Hobab's own personal and admissible interest: "We will do thee good; and it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." It is not the province of religion, it is true, entirely to

exonerate its professors from trials, yet it is one of its greatest attributes to proclaim, amid the severest trial, "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." No true interest of a community, nor of an individual, is impaired by piety. "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The advantages which usually attach to a religions life are, in many instances, natural as well as providential and gracious, inasmuch as the disrespect of the obligations of religion often tend to the violation of those laws of nature which are intended for the protection of health and life, and the promotion of ordinary prosperity. When religion is the controlling power of the heart, purifying and prompting all motives, it "addeth no sorrow," and fortifies the soul against self-reproach, and all the evils incident to the disregard of the government of God. Look around you, and consider the character of those who serve God and those who serve him not, then ask yourself who are the more virtuous and happy? In this comparison it must be remembered that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." "The little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." With Christ, and through Christ, the contented and peaceful spirit of religion receives the allotment of providence. Religion may not invariably secure temporal prosperity, yet its entire spirit is more likely to promote even the temporal welfare of men. "We will do thee good," is graven upon the portals of Zion. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether," "and in keeping of them, there is great reward."

But it was not alone the good that Hobab was person-

ally to secure, that formed the argument by which Moses urged him to unite with Israel. He appealed to that desire to be useful which should be cherished by every man. "No man liveth unto himself." For good or for evil, every mam makes some impression on the world around him. The heart must be hard indeed, that never beats under a sense of its responsibility to God and to man. Many hearts will feel this motive when personal considerations are less potent; so thought Moses, when he said, "Leave us not, I pray thee; for asmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." The Church is constituted of those who may say, "For, as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Mutual dependence and sympathy exist in the various relations of society. However diversified the temperament of men, or however varied their gifts, each possesses elements of character which may be sanctified to "the profit of many." We must never treat with indifference those "who are without." "Act towards your enemies as though you expected soon to make them your friends," was the advice which Cyrus gave. Armies are often equipped with weapons taken from their adversaries; and as David said of the sword of Goliah, "there is none like it." So everything useful in the natural possession of man, may be rendered subservient to the cause of God, when "sanctified unto honor." The gem in "the hole of the pit" may, by the hand of the heavenly lapidary, receive a form and brilliancy in which it may glow on the breast-plate of the great high priest, or sparkle upon the coronet of the Prince of Peace. God had promised Israel that he would go before them. The unfailing banner of glory had led them, in the cloud

by day and the pillar of flame by night. What need, then, had Israel of the eyes and knowledge of this uncircumcised Midianite? Shall the Church be dependent upon man?" No; but herein is seen the condescension of God, that he can choose men "out of the world, and ordain them that they bear much fruit." He can send bread to his prophet in his wilderness retreat, in the bill of a little raven, and open the fountain to the vision of Hagar through the agency of an angel; he can feed the multitude in the wilderness, by multiplying the barley loaves and small fishes, carried by the hands of a boy, or he can strengthen the world amid a general famine, by the bread provided through the wisdom of the exalted Joseph. Society abounds with men, who lack but the "one thing needful," to make them pillars of strength and beauty in wisdom's temple. No talent is so humble, no ability so exalted, that it cannot acquire beauty and strength by its contact with the cross. In our expostulations with men to become Christians, let us not only admonish them of the blessedness inuring to themselves from partaking of the "common salvation," but let us urge, with no less fervor, the great incentive that every converted heart is a "vessel of mercy," which may bear to others the intimations of that grace which enables the Christian to live "the life of faith in the Son of God," and ultimately to ascend from the scenes of his toil to those of his eternal rest, and when he shall bear to the garner of God "his sheaves rejoicing."

APPLICATION.

1. In conclusion, let me say to those who rejoice in being numbered with the sacred host of God's elect, that you should evince your high appreciation of your emancipation from "the yoke of bondage," by the readiness with which you journey towards the land of your

nobler freedom. Trials are incident to your journey. "Know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Whatever sufferings may be your portion, or whatever the "reproaches of Christ," you may be called to struggle with, still endure "as seeing him who is invisible;" singing in the land of thy pilgrimage:

"How oft, when dark misfortune's band,
Around their victims stood,
The seeming ill, at thy command,
Hath changed to real good."

2. Let your heart, my brother, be greatly humbled under a due sense of your great unfruitfulness in the cause of Christ. To whom have you said, "Come thou, and go with us?" Of all now before the throne, who have gone "out of great tribulation," and of all now "journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you," whose soul has been won to God by your instrumentality? Can you designate any? Oh! think upon this subject seriously, and then say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" If a consciousness of past remissness should press upon your heart, let your prayer be, with that of David, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

3. To those who still walk about Zion, but as yet have never entered into her palaces, who have no inheritance in Jacob, let my text embody the greeting of this Church. By the purity of their lives, by the charity of their spirit, by the fervor of their love, with which you are so familiar, they say, "Come thou, and go with us." Of the happiness of Israel you have no doubt

With an admiration that you could scarcely suppress, you have often said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Say then, in the decision that took Moses out of Egypt, that made Joshua the servant of the living God—oh! say to the Church, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

XVIII.

THE CROSS CONTEMPLATED.

BY EDWARD T. HISCOX, D.D.,

Pastor of Stanton street Baptist Church.

And sitting down, they watched him there.—MATT. xxxvii. 36.

THE last act in the cruel tragedy was transpiring. Malicious hearts and wicked hands had triumphed and the innocent victim of persecution and hatred was expiring in agony. The long conflict of error with truth, of bigotry and envy against the manifest power of God, now subsided. The false witnesses, the unjust sentence, the scourge, the nails and the spear, had with summary judgment disposed of the question which had divided public opinion, and disquieted the land so long. Jesus at length was on the cross. The jealous guardians of ancient traditions, the teachers and defenders of old forms, could now rest from their anxious strife, and give their thoughts to festive scenes. So far as he was concerned, they had nothing now to do but to see him die. "And sitting down, they watched him there."

What a scene! With what varied interest did the gathered multitude contemplate the sufferer. The city walls were thronged with curious spectators; the grounds around and overlooking the cross were filled with the jostling crowd. But what diverse chords were struck, when the hammer drove the nails. What strange discordant notes were touched by the spear

that pierced his side. The joy and triumph of his foes, the grief and anguish of his friends, the indifference, scorn, or pity of the idle spectators—even these emotions might now to some degree cease with the excitement of the events. The deed was done. He was safe, for the time at least, and each could now with calmer thoughts contemplate the case, and judge of it as he might be disposed. "And sitting down, they watched him there."

This text well describes the attitude which the world maintains towards Christ crucified. The scene most truthfully illustrates the disposition of men towards the gospel of God's grace. The people stand contemplating the spectacle of a suffering Saviour, and awaiting the results of gospel trials and of gospel triumphs with the varied interest which their relations to, and their regard for, that gospel would naturally inspire. Indeed, Christ crucified is the spectacle which commands the attention of the world. Friends and foes have acted their subordinate parts in the events of its history, but divine grace is unfolding its mysteries to men, and the wondering nations wait to see the end. An attention is being given to the preaching and the progress of Christianity in individual hearts, in congregations, in cities, in states, in nations, never before known. The cross stands central to all the interests of humanity. New relations are found to exist between the gospel and the welfare of society, whether personal, domestic, social, commercial, or governmental. Far off and near, Christ is set forth, crucified before all: "And sitting down, they watched him there."

I. They watched him as *enemies* who rejoiced in his sufferings.

A considerable part of those who watched him there

were the bitter foes that had followed him, as the wolf tracks its prey, thirsting for his blood. They had plotted his ruin, and rested only from their devices of iniquity now that they saw him secure upon the cross. Envy and malice found here their first repose. Year after year, Scribe and Pharisee, Priest and Levite, had witnessed his rising fame with emotions of mortified pride, of disappointed ambition, of growing hatred, which were painful to be borne. They had defamed him before his friends; they had exasperated his foes; they had stirred the rulers against him, and left no method untried to compass his destruction. Was not this, therefore, a joyful hour to them? Their schemes were crowned with success. Their hopes were realized. What malicious joy must have filled their hearts, as from the city walls they saw the Lamb of God slain by wicked hands. Every groan to them was as a shout of victory. They could now make long prayers in the market places and at the corners of the streets; destroy widows' houses; and lay heavy burdens on men's shoulders, with a more sanctimonious show of godliness than ever, since they had put out of the way him whom they hated most of all. "And thus sitting down, they watched him there."

Alas! did they not know that *there* hung their own hope? That the only redemption for men was in that sacrifice? Blinded by unholy passion, they neither knew nor cared for methods of grace nor ways of salvation. Their work was to destroy. With calm satisfaction they could contemplate the achievement of their purposes, the result of long and anxious endeavor.

Thus has it ever been. Thus is it now. The enemies of Christ watch his cause and the progress of the gospel, with that peculiar interest with which one watches his deadly foe, seeking to do him harm, and rejoicing in every

calamity that befalls him. Has not the world seen enough of the gospel and received enough of its blessings to love it and desire its success? It might be supposed so. And yet in every community, perhaps, are found those who hate, persecute, and labor to destroy the cause of Christ. They throw every obstacle in the way of its prosperity, and rejoice in all its adversity. Sitting down, they watch with earnest desire the coming of evil upon the name and the cause of Jesus.

Wretched, self-deceived men! why do you attempt to destroy the only hope of a guilty world? Why do you madly try to extinguish the only light that can cheer life's dark path, and dispel the gloom of death's darker hour? You hate the Cross—you curse the Church—you vilify the Christian name—you reproach religion in the presence of your family and friends—you teach your children to grow up revilers of that sacred name by which alone we must be saved. And when it is all accomplished, what have you done? You have destroyed, not the gospel, but your own soul. You have not delayed by one step the march of conquering grace, but you have secured an inevitable perdition to yourself and perhaps to those you love. In your attempt to give the suffering Saviour vinegar and gall, you have filled your own cup with the bitterness of death, which you shall drink to its very dregs. This you have done!

You yourself must be saved by Christ crucified, or forever perish. Every blow you strike at him you strike against your own welfare. On that ship your own eternal destinies are embarked, together with those of all you love. If it founders, you must go down! Would you sink it, and consign yourself to eternal death? Or if you are resolved to die, spare, oh, spare the souls of those you love! Let *them* come to Christ and be saved. Cease your unholy attempts to set them

more at enmity against their God. If they will be reconciled, do not hinder them. Will it mitigate your sorrows, for them to perish with you? Will it make your fate more tolerable, for them to be your partners in it? The rich man lifted up his eyes in torment, and prayed that his brothers might be spared that dreadful doom. Are you more heartless, or less considerate than he? Do you covet the companionship of relatives and friends while suffering the judgments of a righteous God?

Foolish and wicked men! You who set yourselves in array against the Lord and his Anointed, be sure the time is at hand for him to take to himself his great power and reign. Then will he slay his enemies before his face. You have said with profane and insulting jest, "Come down from the cross and we will believe on thee." He does not accept your challenge, nor gratify your curiosity for new miracles. Still is Christ on the cross, lifted up to draw all men unto him. On the cross that you might watch him. But even there he conquers; conquers in his humiliation and suffering. Do you not hear many a centurion, many a soldier, who perhaps have helped to crucify him, exclaim, as his dying agonies shake the world, rend the veil of superstition, break the rocks of impenitency, and call forth from the grave of years, souls dead in trespasses and sins, "Surely this is the Son of God?"

But he will come down from the cross when the work of his redeeming grace is done. He will come down from the cross and ascend the throne of his dominion. A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom, and he shall reign until he hath put all enemies beneath his feet. Then, guilty sinner, you who wage your insane warfare against the gospel, who withstand the Spirit, who despise the means of grace, you will learn that Christ can *destroy* as well as save.

Be persuaded to cease your strife; submit to the sacred influences that can save you, and rejoice with those who rejoice. The proud and wicked scribes and priests might have found pardon and a paradise at the hand of Jesus, as well as the dying thief, had they, like him, sought it. So may you. No longer sit watching as an enemy, but come as a penitent, and receive his pardon and blessing.

II. They watched him as *friends* who were afflicted in his sufferings.

They were not all enemies who surrounded that cross, who witnessed that scene. There were some true and faithful hearts, wrung with deepest anguish in that dreadful hour. The iron had entered their soul. And though helpless, and almost hopeless, within them glowed a holy affection which even death could not quench. There were his mother and his brethren, and many others of whom he had said, "the same is my mother, my sister, and my brother." "And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off beholding these things." The "daughters of Jerusalem," with a great company of people that followed him, "which also bewailed and lamented him."

A friend and a brother was suffering an unjust and a cruel death. Could they be insensible to that scene? They did not arise in vindictive anger to avenge his death. That was not the evidence of love he desired. He had taught them to be patient in suffering—not to resist evil, but to leave the recompense with God. Sorrow was in many a heart that day, and the voice of wailing and of woe went up to heaven, as witness against that devoted city. Many a prince had died in Jerusalem, and been borne to his sepulchre with great

lamentation. But never had king or priest given up the ghost in the midst of a more true and sincere sorrow, surrounded by a deeper and more genuine mourning, than when the Prince of the kings of the earth died on Calvary. No royal palace sheltered him, no bed of state sustained his sinking form, no crimson canopy gave a sacred privacy to his last hour, and shut out the profane gaze of the mocking multitude. Exposed to public scorn, writhing with inflicted tortures, insulted with ribald jests, he bowed his head and died.

Yet many were there who suffered in his suffering, and would have given their life to have spared his. Hearts there were that beat responsive to every throb of agony he felt, and tears by many wept, as only they can weep who love much. "And sitting down, they watched him there."

Thus the friends of Jesus, with alternate hope and fear, watch the fortunes of his cause. Afflicted in its afflictions, grieved when it declines, and in *their own souls* feel every blow struck by hostile hands against it. Their own welfare is forever *one* with its prosperity. Its darker hours are as the gloom of death to them. Their love is stronger than their faith; and in every new reverse they see a new occasion for despondency, but do not realize the better time to come.

Ah, fearful Christian, take fresh courage! What though the Lord you love is on the cross; he will come down and save both himself and you. You think sometimes that, through your many infirmities, you shall not see the land that is afar off. Be not disheartened. The arm extended on the cross is mighty to save. You, though faint and feeble, shall see the King in his glory, as well as in his shame.

You think the foes of the gospel are many, and its friends are few. You think the opposition arrayed

against it will succeed, and the cause you love will die. You think the misdeeds of its professed friends multiply its disasters, and cast a darker shade over its prospects. No; you deceive yourself. There are brighter days for Zion, and honors for Emanuel, that eye hath not yet seen. The Pentecost of gospel promise is yet to come. Give to the winds your fears. Sit not there to watch and weep, but arise to *pray*, and *work*, and *wait*.

Child of God, be encouraged. Trust and be not dismayed. Do you read no prophecy of coming good in the bursting tombs? Do you discern no token of gospel conquest in the earthquake's shock? Do you see in the gathering darkness no presage of the downfall of sin? Those wonders which proclaimed his godhead, when his own tongue was mute in death, and convinced his executioners of his divinity, should have inspired his friends with hope. Is it a time for you, disciple of Jesus, to fear and faint, when many of his enemies are becoming obedient to the faith? There is *working*, as well as *weeping*, to be done. Even *then* there was a service, as well as a sacrifice of love, to be performed. A tomb was to be provided, spices purchased, and linen clothes made. Hands must be busy, though hearts were breaking. Some one must go to Pilate and beg the sad privilege of burying him.

Arise, Christian! The Sabbath of an eternal rest draws near. Let the preparations be finished before your sun shall go down. See, through the darkness, the hope of an endless life cheers you, and visions of glorious things overspread the future. Let no one be idle, let no one be indifferent. Let no one who loves him, sit down to watch the Redeemer's cause, leaving the toils and the conflicts to others. Is there nothing you can do for him? Are there none whom he has committed to your care, as, with his dying breath, he

did to the disciple whom he loved? None for whose welfare *you* are to provide? Has he said to no one of you, "Behold thy mother!" Behold thy parent! Behold thy child! thy brother—sister—friend—neighbor! Do not sit down to watch him, and leave his command unfulfilled, and his work undone.

It is to be feared that many of the disciples of Christ, some, perhaps, in all our churches, are sitting down to watch the fight of faith, but unwilling to engage in it. They leave to others the conflict, and do not identify themselves with the cause. They are not, indeed, indifferent to its issue. They desire its success; they rejoice in its prosperity and sorrow in its misfortunes. And yet they are rather spectators of the Saviour's cause, than actors in it. Some falsely and foolishly plead their inability to do anything. Some are so engrossed and overburdened with the world, its business and its cares, as to have little time, and less disposition, for the service of godliness. And some, from long spiritual inactivity, disuse of their capabilities, and habitual neglect, scarcely know what to do, or how to undertake even that which they might desire to attempt. "And, sitting down, they watch him there."

Christian brethren, receive a word of exhortation. Especially to young disciples I speak. Do not sit down to watch Christ crucified, in any such sense as implies your fear of the final failure of his cause, or as intimates a doubt that he will, in his own time, come down from the cross, and gloriously triumph over all his foes. Nor yet in any such sense as will give occasion to suppose that you are not personally interested in, and identified with, his cause. Labor for it, suffer with it, lose yourself in it. Let your life be hid with Christ in God; and though now you may appear with him in reproach, and

in sacrifice, yet, when he comes, you shall appear with him in glory.

III. They watched him as *spectators* who were indifferent to his fate.

Many, in that vast concourse of witnesses who gathered about Calvary, were idle and curious spectators of the scene, with no other interest in it, or care for it, than such as any passing incident might excite. They came to witness an execution, to have an entertainment, and looked with equal unconcern on the friends and foes of Jesus. To the most of them, probably, the three crosses were alike. They cared little for one more than for another, and, had it not been for Pilate's superscription, they could not have distinguished the King of the Jews from the thieves by his side. Certainly, all were not his friends, nor is it to be presumed that all sympathized with his persecutors. Doubtless there were many of the common people who heard him gladly; many, perhaps, of those who spread their garments in the way and cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David;" some of the chief priests who believed on him, but secretly, for fear of the Jews; and more still, from all countries, who had scarcely heard his name.

Jerusalem was full of strangers, come to attend the Passover. Many cared too little even to go out and see him die. And of the very great company who surrounded Golgotha, how few thought that they had any interest involved in that transaction. Their sympathies flowed with the current of popular feeling. When the clamorous multitude demanded his blood they would say, "Crucify him." When the malignant thirst of Jewish bigotry and envy was satiated, and the fearful tokens of divine displeasure against his persecutors,

gave new witness on his behalf, then, with the Centurion and the soldiers, they could exclaim, "Surely this was a righteous man." Why should they care? He was no father, son, or brother to them. No friend, or relative. They had not brought him there. They had not condemned him. If he lived, they would not be the gainers, nor the losers if he died. What was this man more than another? They pitied his friends perhaps. It was hard for his *mother*. And his *sisters*—they were almost broken hearted. How touching was the grief of his *brothers!*

And this is the way in which the great mass of the people contemplate the work of redemption. This is the only interest felt by the multitude before whose eyes the miracles of grace, the wonders of salvation through Christ crucified, are constantly transpiring. Sitting down, they watch it all as indifferent spectators, with no personal interest whatever. It may be very well, they think, for those who desire, to be religious. Let men become Christians if they will; but as for them, they have no *time*, or they do not feel the *need* of it, or they are not ready *now*. To them Christ died in vain; to them he is a root out of a dry ground. They are not *opposed* to religion, but think it a good thing—so they *say*. They are neither for Christ, nor against him; they *think* they are not. Alas! they deceive themselves most fatally!

Could I call up that idle throng whose jostling thousands encircled Calvary, I would say, "Is it nothing to you, O careless men! that this bleeding victim dies? Do you not see through those gaping wounds the way of life? Do you not know that on that cross, between those thieves, hangs your only hope of heaven? There is God's only sacrifice for sin! Do you not understand that it is needful for one man to die for the people, that

the whole nation perish not? Has Caiaphas prophesied in vain?

And the same I say to you, idle watchers of the work of grace, curious spectators of the gospel's power. In this cause your destinies are involved. Can you be indifferent? This gospel spreads for you, starving soul, a feast of heavenly bread, and you must eat or die. Careless! indifferent! Could you be careless if sinking into the depths of the sea? But your soul will sink lower than the grave unless washed in the blood of atonement. Could you be indifferent if your house was being consumed with fire, and your children were perishing in the flames? But except you receive pardon through the dying love of Christ, and are justified by the merits of his sacrifice, a fire shall be kindled that will burn to the lowest hell, and consume unbelievers as the stubble of the field.

Poor sinner! can you afford to sit down and watch the cross with calm unconcern? Have you not too much at stake? Can you face the danger before you without anxiety? Can you court the peril to which you are exposed with composure? You are floating on a shattered wreck towards fearful reefs. You are drifting with the fatal tide to the cataract's brink. You must cast anchor on Calvary or perish. You sit calmly down and watch others taking refuge in Christ. What will you do when the ark shall be closed, and the sweeping floods shall overwhelm the world?

Poor sinner! shall I say? *Guilty* sinner rather. I must not speak too soothingly of your state. Sin is your misfortune, indeed, your greatest misfortune. I pity your condition; but why do you remain in it? I am astonished at your insensibility. Yes, *guilty* sinner! for sin is your crime. You abuse the love and mercy of God; you refuse to be saved when salvatation is

offered you. Sin binds you down to death, and you love the bondage. Christ died for you; the provisions of his grace are for you. For you he suffered pain and reproach; for you he died; for you he has sent forth his Spirit, to show you the way of life and lead you to heaven. For your good the gospel is proclaimed; for your salvation God's people watch and pray. Still you are unmoved, perhaps, and contemplate it all as indifferent spectators only. Still, sitting down, you watch him there; and come no nearer to the cross, than from afar to look upon it.

No external instrumentalities, no surrounding influences can save you. It must be Jesus Christ *within* you. You must have an experimental interest in the merits of his death, or for you he has died in vain. You must come even to his seat, order your course before him, and fill your mouth with arguments.

Dear friends, how long will you be idle spectators of these marvellous things? Come at once and be partakers of them. Better be the thief on the cross by his side, so that you be near him and receive his dying blessing, than to be the unconcerned observer, sitting down to watch him there. Let not this indifference be your ruin; but come to Christ and have eternal life.

CONCLUSIONS.

Christ on the Cross, is a spectacle for the world, for angels, and for men. That scene should command the reverence even of his enemies, while angels worship, and the redeemed, with gratitude, adore.

Let all watch him there.

1. As exhibiting the dreadful nature and the sad fruits of sin.

It was sin that made such a fearful sacrifice necessary. Sin, whose history was written by the scourge, the thorns,

the nails, the spear. Every throbbing agony, every uttered groan, was its fruit. *My* sins—*your* sins—the sins of a guilty and a lost world. The sins we have so much loved, so often cherished, so long continued, so unwillingly relinquished. In the Cross of Christ the penalty due to sin is seen as it is seen nowhere else. There the wrath of God against transgression is inscribed in characters of blood.

2. As setting forth the amazing love of God to guilty men.

Who that contemplates that scene, that sits down to watch the sufferer there, but must witness with astonishment such an exhibition of divine compassion, where God gives up his Son to such a death of agony and shame. That love is experienced in the daily bounties of a gracious Providence; is seen in the works of creation. But when he that had no sin was made sin for us, and the just for the unjust died to bring us near to God, we have an exhibition of love that finds no parallel.

3. As presenting an example of humility and patient suffering.

There, children of men, *there* is your example! Sitting down, watch him, and learn how the innocent can suffer wrong with uncomplaining meekness. Learn how to bear the injuries and the insults of men, to be answered only with prayers and blessing. Learn how to bear the severe but righteous will of God, and wait the recompense of future years. You who receive with ill-disguised vexation the contradictions of the wicked, the persecutions of the cruel, the adverse providences of God. You who are irritable, complaining, or revengeful, look at the dying Saviour, and learn to suffer and forgive.

Do you wonder the multitude, when they had seen all, smote upon their breast and returned? Was it the earthquake and the darkness, or the meek suffering and

the dying prayer of Jesus, which most convinced the mocking soldiery that he was the Son of God?

Friends, how do you contemplate Christ crucified? Sitting down, you watch him there, with what disposition and in what relation? As the *enemies* who hate him? As the *friends* who love him? Or, as the *careless throng* who are indifferent to him? So look that your souls shall live. And when from the cross of his suffering he shall take the throne of his dominion, you shall appear with him in glory, share the triumphs of his grace, and, sitting down amidst the radiant throng, forever watch him there.

XIX.

THE STRAIT GATE.

BY JOHN M'CLINTOCK, D.D.,

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Then said one unto him, Lord are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, etc.—LUKE xiii. 23, 24.

THE teaching of our Lord and Saviour was eminently practical. So far was he from introducing abstract and difficult questions into his own discourses, that he even rebuked those who brought them to him for solution. But all who came to him with such questions were sure to get good advice, even if their curiosity remained unsatisfied. The instance in our text is a case in point. One came inquiring as to the number that should be saved; and Christ bade him "strive to enter in at the strait gate." As if he had said, "It is not your business to inquire, or your interest to know, whether few or many shall be saved, but to use your most earnest endeavor to be found in that blessed number yourself. All that shall be saved, whether they be few or many, must be saved in the same way, by striving to secure the favor of God." It is the business of the Christian not to speculate upon religion, but to practise it. Christianity is not a theory but a life. It is, perhaps, not going too far, to say that all speculative

inquiries which have no relation to practice are unprofitable and even hurtful. I do not wish you to understand me as dissuading you from the study of Christian doctrine, even of its more difficult topics, if you study them with reference to the Christian life. But the lesson of our text rebukes that simply inquisitive spirit which meddles with questions absolutely beyond our comprehension, or speculates upon those that are within it, simply for the sake of speculation. The tests of Christianity are not metaphysical but practical. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." It is wise for us to remember that while there is much to be *done* in our state of probation, there is comparatively little to be *known*. There is a mine of practical wisdom in the proverb,

> "Do what is right in thine own affair,
> The rest will of itself take care."

My simple aim in this discourse will be to develop the proposition that the great business of our life on earth should be *earnest effort to secure our salvation*.

I. The first word of the text implies, in the strongest manner, that there can be no Christian life without earnestness. The word rendered *strive* (ἀγωνίζεσθε), means primarily to contend for a prize in the public games. Our English word *agonize* is derived from it. Paul makes frequent use of the ancient games—especially of the race—to illustrate the Christian career. And what higher type of earnestness could he offer, than the athlete, trained for the combat long and carefully, by rigid drill and self-denial, stripped of all encumbrances, and straining every nerve to win the prize? Watch him as he sets out at the word, and see if you can detect any sign of indifference? Nay, every faculty is awake, and, at the sound, he bounds away. Watch him during

the progress of the race, as he passes by you. Every fibre of his frame, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, quivers with the terrible earnestness of the struggle. Every sinew is strained to its utmost tension; every muscle is playing at its greatest speed; his heart beats rapidly with the high-strung effort; he will win the race or die.

Ah! this is *striving*. And Christ enjoins upon you just such earnestness as this in the Christian race. If you are careless in preparing for it, you shall not win. If you are too indifferent to the issue to deny yourself, you shall not win. If you try to carry weights, you shall not win. "So run that you may obtain; and every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."

II. Another figure is employed in the text to illustrate the need of earnestness, viz.: the *strait gate*. The difficulty of the Christian's task is represented under the figure "of a narrow path, conducting through a narrow gate, into the strong citadel of eternal life." It is given more at length in Matthew (vii. 13, 14). "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because, strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The thought which underlies this figure, and even the figure itself, may be found in heathen writers. Pythagoras used to say to his followers, "there are various ways of sinning; evil is indefinite; but good is confined to one precise line." But the figure, as used by Christ, has a point and definiteness which are wanting to it when employed to illustrate mere systems of ethics. The "gate" of eternal life is strait, because "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." There is but one way to salva-

tion; the way of earnest repentance and of sincere faith. And our text represents this way as difficult; the entrance to it is "strait."

Do not misunderstand me. There is no difficulty in religion in and of itself. Christ is not a hard master; nay, he is all love and gentleness and benignity. His words of invitation are full of grace and tenderness. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."

The commandments of God are not, of themselves, grievous. But, although the "law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," it is yet our miserable case, before we come to Christ, that "sin worketh death in us by that which is good," so that, although the law is spiritual, "we are carnal, sold under sin." It would, therefore, be a sad perversion of Christ's gracious invitations, to make them mean that no strife is necessary at the beginning of the Christian life, no earnestness in its continuance. Safe and beautiful as the narrow way is, it runs through an enemy's country.

If, then, you are about to *begin* the Christian life, make up your mind to strive earnestly. The very first step to be taken is *repentance*, and that involves not merely sorrow for your sins, but utter abandonment of them. For years, it may be, your conversation has been in the world; its evil ways are familiar to you; its evil habits have been superadded to your native corruption. It will not be an easy task to unravel the sinful web you have been weaving so long; in your own strength, in deed, it is an impossible one. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." The

enemy has entrenched himself in the very citadel of your heart; it will take earnest fighting and prayer to dislodge him.

Then you will find *sacrifices* necessary at the beginning, and, thereafter, in every step of the way. "If any man will come after me," says our blessed Lord, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." The flesh is to be crucified, with its affections and lusts; and, depend upon it, the flesh will cry out under the infliction. There must be a death unto sin, before there can be a life unto righteousness; and the throes of the soul in its separation from sin are like the pangs that attend the dissolution of soul and body. True, in escaping from sin, the soul breaks its chains and slips away from a disgraceful and destroying bondage; but yet, it is a slavery which the unregenerate soul delights in; it hugs its fetters lovingly.

Again, you will find earnest strife necessary in breaking away from sinful company and associations. The gate itself is "strait," but you will find the difficulty increased by the crowd standing always about it, and urging you not to go in. Many of them are your friends—some, perhaps, your kindred; your own flesh and blood may stand in the way to hinder you. At all events, the mass of mankind is going the other way; and oh! how easy it is to go with the crowd! If you are bent upon separating from them, and on going the safer way, with better company, though fewer, make up your mind to *strive*. The world will not let you escape without a struggle. Every weapon will be tried; flattery, seduction, threats, sneers—you will certainly meet some of these; perhaps you may meet them all. Ah! you will need to be in *earnest*, in order to press your way on, against the points of all these spears.

But, perhaps, you have formed no bad associations.

You have been brought up in a Christian household, and environed, from childhood, by blessed influences. Instead of hindering you in the Christian life, all at home will help you. If so, thank God for your happy lot. A Christian education is one of the richest blessings that can befall a child. But do not fancy that because you have enjoyed it, you shall be able to get in at the "strait" gate without earnest effort. The adversary of men knows how to prepare special baits for just such souls as yours. With his native craft sharpened by ages of experience, he lies in wait for you; to lull your fears; to hinder your believing; to stupefy your conscience; to inject evil thoughts into your heart. He will, if possible, make you appear pure in your own eyes, though yet unwashed from your filthiness; make you fancy yourself "rich and increased in goods," while you are yet "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Do not dream, then, with such an enemy, so subtle and so skillful, always tracking your path, that you shall be able to "enter in at the strait gate" without earnest strife.

Do I say all this to discourage you? Nay, but to warn and stimulate you. I dare not deceive you. Easy as Christ's yoke is, it is still a "yoke" for the unregenerate soul. But, after all, it is the price of the only true rest. It is good for you to bear this yoke; nay, it is essential to true freedom. Were I to describe the way of holiness as smooth and easy from the beginning, you would soon come back to me with bitter reproaches, and tell of the lions you had encountered. What then? Do you find it hard to repent? Nevertheless, "strive to enter in." Do you find it hard to believe? Still cry, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief," and "strive to enter in." Have you been seeking Christ for many days without obtaining light or comfort? Depend upon

it, you are still, consciously or unconsciously, cherishing some sin, preserving some idol, clinging to your self-righteousness, or keeping up your unbelief. Strive earnestly to "lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset you." Let not the devil tempt you to give up the pursuit; you are safe while striving; but give up the effort, and your immortal soul is imperilled.

Thus far, I have spoken only of the difficulties that beset the beginning of the Christian life; but in its *continuance* you will find them still. It will require the same earnest endeavor to keep your hold upon Christ as to secure it. Many err here, believing that when the soul is once converted the work is done. Vain dream! the Christian life is a warfare, from the beginning to the end. It is quite possible to "run well for a season," and then to drop by the wayside, or to turn off into one of the by-paths which the devil keeps always open, with flowery entrances and attractive fingerboards, to seduce the unwary. Your faith will not go untried, even after God has accepted you in Christ. He will uphold you in every trial, if you keep your fidelity; but you will find it necessary at every step to watch and pray, to fear and to struggle. You will be tried by all the old seductions that formerly prevailed with you, and by all the new allurements that the ingenuity of the adversary can invent. You will find "fightings without and fears within," all calling for intense and continued earnestness in this spiritual strife.

"But is it God's object to drive us out of the way?" Nay, but "he will put strength in you," if you are faithful. Christ said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." The object of all trial is your final glorification,—"that the

trial of your faith being much more precious than gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." There is no hint in Scripture of the possibility of final failure in the case of any who "fight the good fight of faith" to the end; but the Bible is full of warnings against security, against forgetfulness, against ceasing to strive earnestly. No matter what stage of Christian experience you may be permitted to reach, you shall never, on this side of the dark river, be beyond the duty of bearing arms and using them in the fight; you shall never reach the point in which you ought not every day to say:

My soul, be on thy guard,
Ten thousand foes arise,
The hosts of sin are pressing hard,
To draw thee from the skies.

Oh, watch, and fight and pray,
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day
And help divine implore.

But, at the same time, remember there is no fear so long as you continue earnest and striving.

Surrounded by a host of foes,
Stormed by a host within,
Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
Single against hell, earth and sin—
Single, yet undismayed I am,
I dare believe in Jesus' name.

III. The *necessity of earnestness* is further enforced by Christ in the text, in the fearful declaration, "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." It is fearful, indeed; but do not pervert it, and so make it more fearful than it is. Christ does not say that any

who really strive to enter in shall fail. There is no such case on record in the Bible, or in the history of Christ's kingdom on earth. No prodigal ever repented and returned to the house of our Father without receiving a welcome. But Christ does refer to those who, having neglected to enter in at the strait gate, seek some other mode of entrance. He does refer to those who, having failed to go in when the door was open, shall come to it with vain pleas for mercy, after it is shut and barred for evermore.

Here a third figure is introduced—that of the marriage supper; a figure so often used that it has become part of the Christian thought itself: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

The master waits to receive his guests until they are assembled; then he rises and shuts the door. None can be admitted afterward. The day of grace is over—the day of judgment is begun. If you have failed, during the allotted time, to secure the wedding-garment, you will find no substitute for it then. If you have never "striven to enter in at the strait gate" while it was open, and the master's servants were inviting and urging you to come in, you shall seek admittance in vain when the door is shut.

Be in earnest, then, while the time of mercy lasts. Strive, while strife will avail. How soon the door will be shut against you no man knows. You are alive and within the reach of mercy to-day; to-morrow you may be dead, and "there is no discharge in that war." Put

your hand at once to the work of saving your soul, and "do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." If you sow not in the spring, no labor will avail in the harvest. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Use them wisely for your soul's salvation; for the hours of darkness will surely follow.

And now, choose at which gate you will enter. The broad way is apparently easy and plain; it is crowded with travellers. Men of all classes are walking in it, seemingly happy and unconcerned, except to gather all the fruits and flowers that hang so temptingly by the wayside. The great men of the world are there; soldiers whose name fills the ear of nations; statesmen accustomed to deal with the destinies of empires; scholars that have widened the limits of human knowledge and wrung nature's closest secrets from her grasp of ages; poets whose creations of beauty shall be a joy to mankind for ever; artists that have caught the trick of nature; all these you may find in that way. Strong men and beautiful women are treading it with mirth and gladness, with joys and banquetings, "and the harp and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine are in their feasts." But yet, their way leads to *death*. They "regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands;" and so "their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp shall descend into hell."

Go not in the way with them. The gate of life stands open; and, strait as it seems, it has admitted an innumerable company, and the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. Christ stands beckoning you to enter; his invitation is broad and urgent—"Whosoever will, let him come." The way looks difficult, I grant; nay, it *is* difficult; but the difficulty will lessen as you advance. The crooked shall be

made straight, and the rough places plain. The longer you walk in it the more delightful you will find it. It is the "king's highway of holiness;" a way on which the vulture's eye hath never gleamed, on which the lion and the lion's whelps have never trodden. It is the way in which "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." Enter in at the strait gate; walk in this narrow path, and it will end infallibly in glory, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life. Christ, the Lord, will be your companion and friend on the way, and at the end of it will crown you with everlasting joy.

XX.

MAN'S PERDITION NOT OF GOD.

BY EDWIN F. HATFIELD, D.D.

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Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God.—Ezek. xviii. 23.

That men die, everywhere, always, no one questions for a moment. Death is a fixed fact. It cannot be escaped. Sooner or later it must pass upon all, "for that all have sinned." Not all the earnest and anxious care of the fondest friends; not all the skill and attention of the ablest physicians; not the most sober, prudent, and judicious course of conduct; nor even the most exalted piety, can shield us from the assaults of death. "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." "One event cometh to them all."

The language of the text, therefore, is not to be understood of natural death. It refers to a death that may be prevented, of a death that affects not the righteous but the wicked.

Nor can it be understood as the mere absence of spiritual life. All men, in their natural, unrenewed state, are represented as already "dead in trespasses and sins."

Another and far more dreadful death is meant. Unpardoned sin calls for judgment. The soul that leaves the body, unreconciled to God, must be forever banished from the presence of God and the abodes of the blessed. "The wages of sin is death." "The end of those things is death." "There is a sin unto death." This death is called "the second death," and is contrasted with eternal life." It is described as "everlasting punishment," and is represented as "the fire that never shall be quenched."

It is of this never-ending death, the appropriate "wages of sin," that God speaks in this appeal to Israel. This is the penalty of the broken law—a penalty incurred by every transgressor, and not to be escaped but by "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." They who "believe have passed from death unto life." "On such the second death hath no power." All else are yet in their sins, under the curse, and in danger of endless death.

To which of these two classes do you that hear me belong? Do you know? Can you tell what will become of you when you leave the body? If to-day your soul should be required of you, are you confident of escaping the second death? Have you been born again? No? Then you "cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Have you been converted? Not converted? Then you must perish. Are you a true believer? Not yet? "He that believeth not shall be damned."

This, then, is the great alternative set before you: turn or die; repent or perish; believe or be damned. It is a fearful alternative. You must be delivered from the guilt and the power of sin, or be shut out for ever from the holy city. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination."

You are conscious, many of you, of no such conversion. Your sins have been multiplying until now. You have been going on in a continual course of disobedience, impenitence, and unbelief, to this hour; treasuring up "wrath against the day of wrath." From your childhood, you have been hardening your heart against God, your Maker. You have been admonished, entreated, and warned, again and again. But you continue to press on. You have been instructed carefully, faithfully, and constantly, in respect both to the way of salvation, and to the consequences of unbelief. Yet you turn not, tremble not, fear not. Onward you go, neglecting the great salvation, and heeding not the voice that calls you to the skies.

In many cases, doubtless, this apparent indifference is to be attributed to a secret unbelief. You do not credit the declarations of infinite love. You persuade yourself, that the fault is not wholly your own. You seek to cast it off—either wholly or in part. You cannot believe, that the difficulty is entirely with yourself

You are disposed either to justify or to excuse your long-continued course of transgression, by a reference to your circumstances. You cannot be persuaded, that God himself has not something to do with it. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me," said Adam, "she gave me of the tree and I did eat." "The fathers have eaten sour grapes," said Israel, "and the children's teeth are set on edge." "We are delivered to do all these abominations." "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?"

"It is not my fault," you say, "not at all, that I am not a Christian. I have long thought, that it would be a good thing to be one of God's people. I have been, these many years, wishing and hoping that I might

some day be converted and be prepared for death. But how can I change my own heart? That is not my work. It is God's. I must wait his time. If God does not give me his spirit, how am I to blame?" Thus you speak, at least in your hearts. You would have us believe, that you are quite willing to be saved, to become a penitent believer in Christ, but that God does not see fit to save you. You intimate that you are ready, but your Maker not; that you have no pleasure in your death, but that God has—that he alone, or chiefly, is to blame for it.

Stand to it if you can. Be honest, frank, candid. If the thought is in your heart, bring it out. Avow it openly, manfully. If you are not to blame, God is. If you are to blame only in part, then the fault is, in part, God's. Either you or God must bear the responsibility. You disclaim it. You cast it, therefore, upon your Maker. Shrink not from the consequences of your own theory. If you are ready to take all the blame to yourself, to acquit God wholly, it is well. Admit it fairly and fully. Do not even insinuate, that God has anything whatever to do with it. Confess it, and "prepare to meet thy God." But if otherwise, say so.

What, now, is the imputation? You say, or you intimate, that the sole cause, or the chief cause, of your continuing in sin, impenitence, and unbelief, is, that God is not willing, is not ready, to save you from your sins, and to bring you into the household of faith; that you must wait God's time; that it is by no means clear, that he is willing to save you at all, and that, therefore, dreadful as is the thought, you must perish hopelessly, endlessly. And all this, because God has pleasure in your death. This is what you say, what you think. We have probed the heart; we have found the sore.

But what is this that comes to us from the throne?

It is the voice of your God. It is the language of amazement: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord." Is it my pleasure, my preference, my delight? Have I *any* pleasure in it, even on the whole? Have I any pleasure *at all*—the least particle of pleasure? It is the language of intense emotion, of holy indignation; expressive, most fully, of the falseness, the baseness of the imputation. It is a direct appeal to the sinner himself. It challenges him to make out his case—to bring forward the proof, in whole or in part, and to show the complicity of the Almighty in the matter. He reasons with the sinner as with his fellow; appeals to the principles of his government, the equity of his administration, and the whole history of his dealings with Israel; and then, having exonerated himself fully, he calls upon his guilty subjects to acknowledge, that the fault is all their own. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." He himself gives the answer to his own appeal. He puts in an absolute disclaimer of the whole charge.

Nay, more, as if this were not enough, he puts himself under oath; and, "because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself," saying: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." What would you, what could you, more? You will not charge him with equivocation; much less with willful falsehood, with perjury! Satan himself can do no more. Strange that God cannot be taken at his word—that you can believe any one sooner than God!

Still you cling to the thought, and try to persuade yourself, that God has all to do with your present impenitency. You will have it, that he has some pleasure in it, or it would not be. How do you come by this knowledge? Can you look into the heart of the Omniscient? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Who art thou, that thou shouldst sit in judgment on the Infinite, the Incomprehensible, the Eternal? Proud worm of the dust! be ashamed of thine arrogance, and sink into thine own nothingness.

You forget, that "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent." You are wont to transfer to your Maker your own thoughts and ways. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." But "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." What a disparagement of Infinite Purity to suppose, for a moment, that the Holy One of Israel can be judged of by the corrupt heart of a sinful worm?

The appeal is not to be made in this, or any similar case, to the preconceived opinions of him that has cut himself loose from God, and seeks to justify himself in his sins. God is known in his works, and in his word. By these you may learn what he is, and in what he takes pleasure. Look, then, at—

I. The works of the Almighty.

You live in the midst of the unnumbered works of the Creator, yourself the workmanship of his fingers. What are the characteristics of these glorious works of the Eternal Father? Order, harmony, beauty, greatness, goodness, love. All these are clearly seen. Nowhere do you find a particle of proof, that the wretchedness of the creature gives pleasure to the Creator. All

nature, as well as the Bible, teaches that "God is love." He has fitted up the universe to be the abode of blessedness. He has framed our own natures for the sweetest, purest, richest enjoyments—every sense to be a vehicle of pleasure, and not of pain. How easy it would have been for him, to have made each one of our senses an organ of the most intense suffering, of anguish unspeakable! Look at your own physical constitution; study it, if you please, in the various aspects in which Dr. Paley exhibits it in his Natural Theology; and you cannot but see that your Maker's appeal in the text is fully sustained.

Passing from the works of creation, look next at his works of Providence. How kind, how good, how gracious the operations of his hand! Even in the days of grossest darkness, "he left not himself without witness in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The whole earth is full of his goodness. You have only to call to mind his providential dealings with yourself, from your very birth, through your infancy, childhood, youth, and riper years, to be convinced of his loving-kindness. How various have been his mercies, his bounties! how timely, how appropriate, how unmerited, how lavishly bestowed, how infinite! When has he ceased to shower down upon you the blessings of his goodness? When, to load you daily with his benefits? "They are new every morning." "If I should count them they are more in number than the sand."

"When all thy mercies, O my God!
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

Enumerate his acts of goodness to your sinful soul for but a single day, and multiply these by the days of your mortal life. Cast up the mighty sum and tell me, what fond and doting parent would, if able, have done as much? Not all that man could say or do would convince you that a fellow-being, from whom you had received a thousandth part of what you have received from God, was your greatest foe; was not your best friend, and was not most delighted when most you were freed from pain, and filled with pleasure. How you would resent the vile insinuation! And why will you suffer it in the case of your Maker? Why cherish it?

True, you are not free from pain, from sorrow, from trouble. In a world of sin, yourself a sinner, what else is to be expected? You have your troubles; but have they, in number, or in aggravations, kept pace with your sins? God has borne much from you, and borne long. Would a creature have borne it? Would you yourself, from another? Yet he bears with, he blesses, you still. Your provocations have been as innumerable as your mercies, and yet have not wearied out his love, have not driven him away, have not diminished the flowing tide of his goodness and grace. When has he ceased to render you good for evil? Had he treated you as you have treated him, what would be your condition, your prospects, now? "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." How have you forgotten God; banished him from your thoughts; given place to the most base intruders, the most shameful usurpers! How have you disregarded his authority, slighted his admonitions, broken away from his kind embrace, cast away the cords of his love, and refused obedience to his most reasonable commands. How long have you been pursuing the broad and beaten path of folly, listening to the faintest whisper of sensual

love, and closing your ears against the loudest remonstrances of love divine! "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" has been your language; "I desire not the knowledge of his ways." Never, even to this hour, have you, in a single instance, obeyed from the heart one of his holy commandments, or yielded to any of his gracious demands upon your time, your strength, your mind, your heart. Day after day, all your life long, he has been seeking a place in your heart, but in vain. He has tried every fond endearment, and sought by the very lavishness of his love, to woo and win you to himself.

What unspeakable grace! And yet you are trying, notwithstanding "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," and your whole life of his love, to persuade yourself, that God has no purpose of mercy respecting you; that he is not willing to save you from your sins; that he actually takes pleasure in denying you a place among the subjects of his grace, a share in his pardoning love, a seat in his heavenly kingdom! Be ashamed, and blush to your very heart's core, even to insinuate, though but for a moment, that your Maker has any other than thoughts of love towards you—that he has any pleasure at all in your death.

But why so much suffering in the world, you ask, if God has no pleasure in it? Enough to know that sin has caused it all. It is the work of the enemy—not God's. Nor is it pleasing to him. Sin is the object of his most intense hatred. He loathes it, abominates it, and wages against it an exterminating warfare. It came into the creation in opposition to his expressed will, has spread and perpetuated itself in direct opposition to his most solemn protests, and is doomed to suffer his eternal displeasure. From its first appearance until now, he has been, with all the might of his infinite majesty

holiness, goodness, and truth, working with uncompromising hostility for its extermination. Does this look as if God had any pleasure at all in your death?

All the evils of this present state are clearly traceable to the prevalence of sin—can be traced to nothing else. Sin is the parent—the prolific parent—of all the sufferings of God's creatures. But sin is not his work. It is the creature's. What is sin? A transgression of God's law—the law written on the heart, or on the pages of inspiration. That law expresses the pleasure of the Almighty. Every transgression of that law must be displeasing to him. He can have no pleasure in it at all. But the death of the wicked implies an everlasting continuance in the transgression of the law of God, the entire absence of holiness, and the perpetuated depravity of the soul. It is impossible, therefore, in the very nature of things, that God should have any pleasure at all in the death of the wicked. Sin is in the world, but not because God delights in it. None but a subject of the law can be a transgressor of the law, can be an author of sin. None but a sinner, then, can be the author of sin. God bears with it, and bears long; but he cannot have even the slightest sympathy with it. Why he suffers it, and so long, eternity will reveal. "God is his own interpreter."

In the works of the Almighty you find not a particle of proof, not the shadow of an intimation, that God is to blame for your continuing in sin; but everything to the contrary Look now at

II. The Word of God.

It is but as "through a glass darkly" that we can see God, in his works of creation and of providence. Other works of his all-gracious hand, as well as brighter manifestations of his being, nature, and perfections, are

brought to view in his Holy Word. We are not left to spell his name by the twinkling stars. "God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.

What kind of a God do these Scriptures reveal to us? Not a Baal, nor a Beelzebub; nor yet a Bel, or a Moloch; a Dagon, or a Vulcan; a Jupiter, or a Mars; a Brahma, or a Vishnu. The God of Israel is like to none of these. He is a God of spotless purity, infinite holiness, eternal truth, perfect goodness, boundless compassion—a God of love. It is not here and there only, in detached passages, that these representations are made. The book is full of them. They are the web, the warp, and the woof of inspiration. The precepts and the promises; the law and the gospel; the doctrine and the history; every part and parcel speak the same thing. The narrative is but a running commentary upon the character of God as therein revealed; a continued illustration from daily life; a development, for thousands of years, of these gracious and glorious characteristics of the God of the Bible, confirming the revelation, and showing that he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Who, now, could gather from these exhibitions that this great and glorious God ever had, or could possibly have, the least pleasure in sin, or in the suffering consequent upon sin? in the crimes of the human family, or in the perdition in which those crimes involve them? In every portion, on every page, is he not presented in a character directly the reverse? Does he not appear, everywhere and always, protesting against sin in all its forms, and even against the very "appearance of evil?" Do we not hear him constantly remonstrating with the

sinner; warning him against the inevitable and fatal consequences of final impenitency; urging and entreating the children of men to abandon the ways of sin; beseeching them to pursue only the paths of truth and virtue; presenting every kind of inducement, and using all possible influences, to restrain them from transgression, and to reclaim them from their wanderings? What more could infinite love itself do than the God of the Bible does?

But you reply, perhaps, that the Scriptures abound also in words of condemnation, denunciation, "indignation and wrath," against the wicked. Yes, it is even so; and well for us that it is. If "the wages of sin is death," it is mercy and love to make it known. If goodness does not restrain, let the voice of justice be heard. Every statute book in the land is full of penalties; and the records of every criminal court show that the penalties are a reality. But will you argue, therefore, that the framers of these statutes had any pleasure at all in prisons and scaffolds; in the shame and disgrace, the sufferings and the death, of the criminal? Was it because he had pleasure in his death, that Washington signed the death-warrant of André? Even when the Almighty, in like manner, is consigning his heritage to desolation, you hear him, with all the yearnings of a loving parent, exclaim—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?"

The God of the Bible, however, contents not himself with a mere verbal exhibition of his love for our race. He is not satisfied with a mere providential development of himself to his creatures on the earth. He "whom no man hath seen nor can see," has made himself visible to mortal eyes. The Invisible takes to himself a human form, and becomes one of us, so that we may "see him

as he is." "God was manifest in the flesh." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus, the Son of Mary, was no less the Son of God, the impersonation and embodiment of the divine being; "for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell." He "is the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." He, therefore, could say to one of his disciples, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;" he could say, "I and my Father are one."

In the Son of God we have, then, a full, clear and lively exhibition of what the Father himself is—a perfect picture of the great God. In character, if not in person, the identity is complete. If the Father has any pleasure at all in the perdition of his creatures, he shares it with the Son. In this sense, Jesus could say emphatically, "All things that the Father hath are mine." And, if it was in the Son, it must have appeared in what he said and did while on the earth.

Who, then, and what was Jesus Christ? What was his life, his demeanor, his spirit, his temper? Who can mistake here? What perfect freedom from all malice, ill-will, and unkindness! "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He was confessedly the perfect embodiment of truth, purity, and holiness; of goodness and mercy, compassion and love. The Roman governor could find no fault in him; and keen-eyed infidelity, on the alert for 1800 years, has not been a whit more successful. No one could have known or heard him; no one can read the testimony that God has given us of his Son, and believe, for one moment, that

Jesus Christ does or can take any pleasure at all in the sinner's death.

His whole life was a glowing illustration of the might and majesty of Infinite Love. What moved him to leave the throne? The sight of our ruin; the sins and sufferings of man. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." His one great errand here was salvation. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved." There you have it—the whole story—the Father and the Son combining to pluck the sinner as a brand from the burning.

What amazing proof, moreover, is given in the person of Jesus, that the Father is in earnest when he urges the sinner to turn and live! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

What means that beautiful, exquisite picture in the fifteenth chapter of Luke? That younger son—who is he? That venerable father, whose heart is breaking for joy, as he clasps his prodigal to his arms—who is he? What words are those that fall from the lips of Jesus, as he sees the famishing multitude flocking around him? "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" It is the Father speaking through the Son. Go now and stand on the brow of Olivet. Who is it that gazes so intensely, painfully, tenderly, on the Holy City, with its myriads of perishing people? What mean those tears, and that impassioned exclamation, "If thou hadst known, even thou,

at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace?" It is again the Father speaking through the Son. Draw near to the consecrated spot, under the shadow of Olivet, and beneath the walls of the city, where the Son of God, "exceedingly sorrowful even unto death," is pouring forth his cries to the Father. Mark that bloody sweat. Hear those groans of anguish. What means it all? It is the Father, as well as the Son, speaking in every tear, in every groan, in every drop of the Saviour's blood, to every sinner, and saying, "How shall I—how can I—give thee up?"

We behold the eternal Father giving to man a perfect law; holy, just, and good; the admiration of every holy being in the universe; admirably fitted, every way, to promote the peace, the prosperity, the purity, and the blessedness of the race forever. And when, by his own folly and crime, man has violated that law, not giving them up to the just and natural consequence of their transgression, but devising a way of salvation for the most guilty, for the world, of mankind; a far-reaching plan of saving mercy, of redeeming love; involving the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son—more to him than of a thousand worlds. We see him, not only devising, but executing that plan; putting in operation the vast and complicated machinery of redemption, and keeping it in operation for thousands of years, at an expense of time and treasure absolutely inconceivable; a machinery, of which all the wondrous operations of his providence are but subsidiary evolutions, working out his grand and glorious purposes of grace to a fallen world.

We see him, in the execution of these purposes of mercy, giving up his only-begotten, the Son as dear to him as his own existence, to the shame and agony of the cross; sparing him not, but pouring on him the wrath

that we, by our sins, had so richly deserved. We see him going down into the sepulchre, to bring up that Son from the grave, robbing death of its sting, and the grave of its victory; taking him to his throne, and the bosom of his love, in glory; and then placing at his command all the resources of the universe, for the accomplishment of his mediatorial designs.

We see him, in the person of this exalted Mediator, putting in operation, also, a wonderful system of agencies and instrumentalities, by means of which to bring the perishing millions of mankind to the knowledge and belief of this infinite grace; a dispensation committed to the Holy Spirit, in the fulfillment of which the gracious Comforter is ever at work among men, penetrating the deepest depths of the human heart, entering the vilest abodes of infamy, washing away the foulest stains, breaking the hardest heart, and making all things new.

All this—and for what? "Not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved." All this, to "show the exceeding riches of his grace" in the salvation of the chief of sinners. All this, to confound the powers of darkness; to silence the caviler; to still the avenger; to inspire the most despairing with hope. All this, to put it for ever out of the power of men or devils to impeach the mercy, compassion, and infinite grace of the Almighty; and to demonstrate, to an admiring universe, the absolute and eternal truth of that delightful, yet wonderful, proposition—"God is Love."

Yet here, far away in this dark corner of his empire, a poor, ignorant, insignificant, polluted worm of the dust, a creature of a day, a mere mote in the air, a mere mite in the creation, has the presumption, the hardihood, the arrogance, after all this most amazing display of unbounded grace, to stand up, and boldly avow his

doubts of the willingness of God to save him; yea, to cast the blame of his continuance in sin and unbelief upon this glorious God of redemption; insinuating, if not affirming, that the sinner's death and damnation are a pleasure to him, and that the Almighty would have it so! Strange, that the God of salvation does not instantly hurl the thunderbolt of his wrath upon thy presumptuous head, and smite thee down to the lowest depths of the bottomless pit! That he "lets the lifted thunder drop," is of itself proof positive, that he has no pleasure in thy death.

But, perchance, you will say, that all this is very well for those for whom Christ has died; that you have been given to understand, that Christ did not die for all the human family; that he died only for the elect; and that you have no evidence that you belong to that highly-favored class; and, therefore, know not that Christ shed his blood to wash away your sins. Do you find any such statements in the word of God? Is it not the language of human philosophy merely? What is the testimony of the Scriptures on this point? Are we not expressly told, that he "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe?" It was love for "the world" that prompted the Father to give his Son, "that the world through him might be saved." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," says the apostle, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." He is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The universal depravity of man is argued from the fact, that the sacrifice was made for all mankind: "If one died for all, then were all dead." On the same ground it is argued, that "if any man sin," he may seek pardon and reconciliation through the great Advocate, "Jesus Christ

the righteous," who "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." To preclude any such limitation of God's grace, on the part of the caviler, it seems to have been placed on record, that the errand of the Son of God to this earth was, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Such, in brief, is the testimony. On this ground it is, that the world are invited to the feast of redeeming love; that Isaiah cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" that Jesus sends out his disciples with the broad commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" that Christ himself exclaims, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" and that the volume of Inspiration closes with that infinitely gracious call, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;"

Away, then, with your limitations of the mercy of God. If you perish in your sins, it will not be, because the blood of Jesus Christ does not cleanse from all sin; nor that this precious blood was not shed for you as truly as for me, or for any of God's saints; nor that the provisions of divine grace were not made for you; nor that the invitations of divine love were not addressed to you; nor that God was not in earnest when he bade you come to the feast of holy love; nor that he had any pleasure at all in your death. If you perish, you will have only yourself to blame. "How often would I," says Jesus, "and ye would not!" "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." If God is constrained to give you up at last, it will be under protest—calling upon heaven, earth, and hell, to bear witness, that it is your own doing, and not his. "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

Be persuaded, perishing sinner, to dismiss from your mind every disparaging thought of God's grace. Believe him, when he affirms that he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Be as willing to come to him through Jesus Christ for pardon, as he is willing to have you come. Take him at his word; put him to the test; make trial of his invitations, of his promises; and you shall know, by sweet experience, the truth of that gracious declaration—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

XXI.

DUTY OF REPENTANCE.

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And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.—Acts xvii. 30.

The times of "ignorance" referred to by the Apostle, were the days when the nations of the earth were left generally to unrebuked idolatry. They worshipped departed heroes; the host of heaven; images of gold and silver, the work of their own hands; "birds, four-footed beasts," and even "creeping things." The expression "winked at" does not imply that God approved of their course. The word thus rendered is composed of a Greek word that means *to see*, and a preposition which signifies *over*. *Overlooked* would be a literal translation. It means, first, that God suffered the nations, with no special visitation, whether of light or of wrath, to pursue their chosen way. There were wise reasons for this. It was well that the polluting and debasing tendency of sin should be fully manifested. It was well that the utter absence of any recuperative power in the human heart should be put beyond a doubt. It was well that the might of man's vaunted intellect should be tested, and all be compelled to own, that the "world by wisdom" would forever fail to know God. The necessity of divine interposition was thus to be demonstrated.

The phrase in hand intimates, in the second place, that the guilt of the benighted Gentiles was the less on account of their ignorance. God estimates blameworthiness, other things being equal, according to the light enjoyed. "This is the condemnation," said our Lord, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin"—comparatively, he means—"but now they have no cloak for their sin." And again, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." This principle of judgment commends itself to all consciences. The guilt of one walking in the midnight, whether of ancient or of modern heathenism, is far inferior to thine, my unbelieving hearer, on whom the noonday brightness of the gospel falls.

The world of old was thus left to itself; but we live "now" under a new dispensation. Now that the Son of God has come to earth, and made atonement, and ascended to glory; now that the way of access to the Father is fully opened, and the gospel proclaimed, "He commandeth all men every where to repent." THE DUTY OF REPENTANCE is the theme here presented. We shall speak first of the NATURE of this duty, and, in the second place, of the ENFORCEMENTS of it suggested by the text.

I. THE NATURE OF THE DUTY.—No question is of greater moment than, What *is* repentance? It is an initial work. It meets us at the threshold of salvation. If it be omitted, all is lost. A radical mistake here, such as men often make, is fatal to the soul. It is important always that it be clearly understood, but especially at the present

time. We are deeply solicitous, amid the general awakening of the public mind—when interest is so liable to evaporate in mere feeling, or to be misdirected—to present the truth of God, on all the great, fundamental points, in the simplest and clearest manner. At a season like this, above all others, and on a subject like this, "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." True repentance embraces three things:

1. *A Conviction of Sin.*—A conviction, I mean, of our own sinfulness. Else there will be no disposition to receive Christ. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." There must be a conviction not merely nor mainly of particulars—of this or that outward or inward act—but of sin in its great unity, *as committed against God.* This is the main view. This embraces the chief evil of sin. Fail of thus apprehending it, and whatever else you think or feel, you fail of true contrition. How prominent was this view in David's penitence. "Against thee," he says, "thee only, have I sinned." Other dark and fearful aspects there were of his transgression; but this, to his eye, so transcended them all, that they were comparatively forgotten. And this estimate accorded perfectly with truth. For sin is simply a transgression of the law—not of a law of nature, so termed, but of *a personal God.* It can be called sin, in the strict and proper sense, only in that view. As God is infinitely exalted above all creatures, and above the sum of all, so a wrong done to him infinitely transcends the aggregate of all other wrongs. It is not difficult to see how the human heart may act, in its repentings, on such a principle. It does work thus, often, in merely human relations. That profligate son, whose evil ways have brought down the grey hairs of a loving and faithful mother with sorrow to the grave, has not, indeed, wronged her alone. Many others have been

harmed by his misdeeds. Yet, as he muses, at that grave, over the greater obligations that bound him to her who bore him, and the greater wrong she has received at his hands, it is no strange thing if all other aspects of his guilt are merged and lost in the blackness of this. It is no marvel if he exclaims, while his bitter tears are flowing, "Against thee, my mother, thee only, have I sinned."

We must be convinced of sin against God, in its two chief relations to him. It is, in the first place, *against God as a lawgiver.* Not merely that we have broken one or another of his commands in the outward form. The great fact is, that we have, in spirit, broken them all. We have lacked the principle of loyalty. We have failed practically to recognize God's sovereignty. We have not enthroned that will divine which gave the law. We have accorded supremacy rather to our own will. At one point or another—at whatsoever point it has seemed good to us—we have said, virtually, "Not thy will—but mine be done." Not in words has this broken from our lips—that would have shocked us. But in the clearer language of conduct we have spoken—the heart's truest dialect. Offending in one point—knowingly, willingly, deliberately, coming short even—we are "guilty of all." We lack utterly the true spirit of obedience; that which acts at every point, which yields itself submissively to every precept. So the Scripture affirms, as in the testimony of the apostle James, just referred to. Such, too, is the verdict of common sense.

We must be convinced also, of our sin *against God in Christ.* Here is the culmination of our guilt. "Of sin," says Christ, speaking of the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, "because they believe not on me." It is impossible to separate, as some would fain do, our relations to Christ from our relations to God. It is the

will of God "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Christ is "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." In a word, "God is in Christ." As Christ is treated, so God is treated. If Christ be rejected, God is rejected. So Jesus said to the Jews, "He that hateth me, hateth my Father also." Nay, as the most glorious manifestation of God is in Christ—as God thus comes nearest to us, making the most potent of all possible appeals to our every susceptibility—so the rejection of Christ is the most aggravated of all our sins. "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?"

A true conviction of sin embraces, first, of course, its *intrinsic wrongfulness.* It is deemed evil in itself. It is seen to be unreasonable and indefensible. The sinner has done with palliations and excuses. He complains no more of the exceeding strictness of the commandment. He sees it now to be "holy, just, and good." He finds fault no longer with the provisions of the gospel. He makes no apologetic reference to circumstances—he pleads not, in self-justification, inability or the power of temptation. He acknowledges his sin—as it stands related both to God in the law and to God in Christ—to be unspeakably blameworthy. He sees, too, the *entireness* of his depravity. Not that he lacks amiable natural traits; not that he is as bad as he can be, sin having reached in him the fullest possible development; but simply that sin reigns. He has broken the whole law, and rejected the whole gospel. Having repudiated God's supremacy, and having enthroned his own will, there is in him, of course, no principle either of obedience or of faith. There is no law of life in

his soul. He is "dead," he sees, "in trespasses and sins." In close connection with all this, he is convinced, too, of his *ill-desert*. The penalty is righteous, as well as the precept. It is meet, he judges, that a holy and just God should frown on a rebel like himself. He "accepts the punishment of his iniquity." Not that he is "willing to be damned." God does not require this —but rather that he be willing to be saved. Terrible to his thought is the perdition of the ungodly. Yet his language still is,

> "Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
> I must pronounce thee just in death;
> And if my soul were sent to hell,
> Thy righteous law approves it well."

It should be noted here, however, that while all we have set forth is substantially embraced in every instance of true conviction, it is by no means embraced in all cases with equal clearness. It is with the facts of our depravity as with many others. Intellectual capacity may differ. Instruction, earlier or later, may be various. Circumstances may have an influence. In the matter of salvation, too, the same Spirit hath a diversity of operation. This only is essential, that we come to judge ourselves wholly and inexcusably sinful, justly condemned—in ourselves hopelessly lost—that this be so seen as to insure the appropriate practical results. Let no one hesitate, then, to come to Christ, merely because his conviction of sin, though it includes all the main elements, has been marked by less of distinctness and vividness than many others have experienced.

2. The second element of repentance is *an abhorrence of sin*. We mean by this, that there must be something more than mere intellectual apprehension. We mean that what the judgment and the conscience condemn,

the heart must repudiate. There must be a real aversion from it, and desire of the contrary. It must not only be *seen* to be wrong, it must be *felt* to be hateful; else you go not beyond the experience of lost men at the day of judgment, or even of devils. Milton has aptly represented the arch-fiend as seeing "virtue in her shape how lovely;" and a greater than Milton has said, "The devils also believe and tremble!"

Few words are required to set forth this point. Yet, awakened souls are liable to a serious misapprehension just here. They imagine, often, some certain degree of emotion to be requisite; and not having been conscious of it, they judge themselves unprepared to accept Christ. They lay great stress on sorrow as an element of penitence, and having never known such intensity of grief as others have professed, they regard their own exercises as essentially defective. Let it be well understood, then, that penitence turns not chiefly on emotion. That, indeed, is of comparatively little moment. The main thing is the decision of the will, the settled bent of the affections. That is as the ground-swell of the sea. The stir of the emotional nature is as the mere foam upon the surface, or as the ripple raised by the passing breeze. This surface-excitement does commonly more or less attend the deeper feeling—just because the several parts of our being are, by joints and bands which God has devised, firmly knit together. Yet it varies indefinitely in different persons—mainly as temperament varies, in part as circumstances differ. As to mental anguish, of which some think so much, it is by no means essential to repentance; and where it exists, it is with great diversity, both in degree and in manifestation. So is it in relation to earthly matters. A dozen men convinced of bankruptcy, would probably exhibit about as many different phases of emo-

tion, about as many different measures of mental suffering. The chief point, you feel, if a man has basely wronged you, is not the play of his lighter susceptibilities, not even the tears he may shed, and the agony of soul he may evince. It is rather his full conviction and frank acknowledgment of guilt; his hearty, unqualified condemnation of the wrong done; and his desire and purpose, however calm, to do thus wickedly no more.

3. The third constituent of true repentance is *a forsaking of sin.* This is the crowning element. By this only can we prove to ourselves and others, that our abhorrence of sin is sincere. As to all feeling, we are liable to self-deception. It is intangible, changeful, evanescent. We may easily mistake a mere animal tremor for the deep movement of the will. Our fancy may transmute mere cloud-wreaths of sensibility into the granite of principle. The only sure test of all our inward exercises is the conduct. Not by mere seeds or germs are men known, according to the Scripture, but "by their fruits." The seed may be false, the germ may lack vitality. Repentance must be *acted.* In view of the importance of this point, let us inquire, for a moment, *how?*

There must be a forsaking of sin, we have said—of sin against God. First, of all sin *against the God of the law.* Against God, in other words, as manifest in the law. Whatever he frowns on, there must be a readiness to renounce. There must be an actual abandonment of everything—both in the heart and the life, both in thought and deed—which the divine law has forbidden. No matter how long cherished, or how dear it may be; no matter how painful the sacrifice, though it be as the plucking out of a right eye. If a single iniquity be knowingly, deliberately retained, there is no true repentance, there can be no good hope of salvation.

Let there be no mistake here. Let us not be understood as saying what we often deny, that the sinner is to delay his coming to Christ till he has purified his own heart, till the last vestige of corruption is purged away; or until he finds himself able, in his own strength, to master all temptation, and to rectify perfectly his whole external conduct. That were a vain waiting, indeed. We do say, however, that even the heart's deep corruption must, in purpose and in aim, be renounced at once. Why, else, should the soul resort to Christ? He comes to save his people *from* their sins, not *in* them. He who would keep a single heart-sin, does not really desire Christ. We especially urge that, in reference to the specific and formal outbreaks of corruption, the particular acts on which conscience can fix its eye, and about which there must be some specific choice, there be no reserve, no compromise. They must be fully and forever renounced. Not even these, indeed, in a spirit of self-dependence, but in reliance on that divine aid which is so freely proffered. Let there be no wedge of gold hidden in your tent, no Babylonish garment. Say of no seemingly trivial sin, "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." On the forsaking even of that, your salvation may turn. A single secret sin is often as the hidden rock on which the soul is wrecked for eternity.

"Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers—
Pulpits and Sundays; sorrow dogging sin;
Afflictions sorted; anguish of all sizes;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in;
Bibles laid open; millions of surprises;
Blessings beforehand; ties of gratefulness;
The sound of glory ringing in our ears;
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;

Angels and grace; eternal hopes and fears—
Yet all these forces, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom-sin blows all away."

There must be, in the second place, a forsaking of sin *against God in Christ.* Important as this point is, it is often overlooked. "Repentance," says one, "is, indeed, a reasonable duty. I do not neglect it. I call to mind, daily, the sins I have committed; I sorrow over them, and resolve to be guilty of them no more. What lack I yet?" We might press the inquiry, Do you indeed truly deplore *all* your violations of God's law, and is the grieving followed by a forsaking? But just here we have another question to ask. Be it as it may in regard to the law, how is it in relation to the gospel? Have you repented of your sin against God as there manifested—of your rejection of his own dear Son? There can be no true penitence, be it ever remembered, until Christ is received. While you harden your heart against him, you harden your heart against the Father. While you refuse to trust in his blood, to avail yourself of his righteousness, to take him as your Saviour-Lord, to give yourself to him—while you stand aloof from him, however calmly, and with whatever outward tokens of respect for Christianity—you are still in opposition to God, you have still in your bosom the stony heart. Unbelief, Christ has assured us, is the great sin; it is against the greatest display of God's excellency. Just at this point, then, is the great work of penitence to be done. True contrition loves especially to break her alabaster box of ointment in the presence of Jesus; to wash his feet with her tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head. Weep over sin wherever else you may, unless your grief is stirred at the foot of the cross, it is but "the sorrow of the world that worketh death." We would still ask him, then,

who professes daily penitence, Have you ceased to turn away from Christ? Have you cast your soul upon him? Is he near and dear to your heart? Would you gladly come to your pastor's study to-day, and talk with him of the love of Jesus, and kneel with him in a common self-consecration to him who has bought us with his own precious blood? Trust, we beseech you, in no repentance which hath not issues like these.

II. We pass to speak, as was proposed, of the ENFORCEMENTS OF THIS DUTY. Not of all, indeed, for the Bible is full of them, but of such only as are naturally and directly suggested by the text. We observe, then,

1. *It is commanded.* We say this, with an eye to the impression, too prevalent, we fear, that this is, in some sense, an optional matter—that it is a proffered privilege, of which it is well that all avail themselves, but not an enjoined service. It is indeed a privilege and an overture—but it is also a mandate. God "commandeth," the text reads, and so many other scriptures. The duty comes to us invested with all the authority of Jehovah. He lays this command, O unconverted man, athwart your path. It lies in your way to yonder door. You cannot leave your seat impenitent, without trampling it beneath your feet. Wilt thou thus war against thy Maker? "Hast thou an arm like God?" "Who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?"

2. *It is a Gospel command.* The expression "now" suggests this. The nature of the case proves it. In repentance, it is true, the great principles of righteousness are all included, the very same that underlie the law. Yet in the law, distinctively apprehended, there can be no place for this duty, though you "seek it carefully with tears." What the law requires, and what alone it will accept, is perfect obedience. Think of a statute against highway robbery, declaring that he who

breaks it shall be punished, unless he repent! Still more absurd would be a law of like character, under the perfect government of God. No; it is only in the gospel that repentance is enjoined—for there only is such an injunction possible. Bear in mind, then, as the duty is urged upon you, that it is a blessed gospel boon. Remember the infinite price wherewith it was purchased —the blood of the Son of God. Enforced it is, as we have said, by the divine authority, yet it is commended to you, also, by all that is tender and persuasive in the love of Christ. It is not Sinai that bids you repent. Only thunders of condemnation come thence, and flashes of wrath. In the words of the text, as in all like scriptures, it is Calvary that pleads with you. Refuse the voice that thus speaketh, and you "crucify" to yourself "the Son of God afresh."

3. *Consider, finally, the help to repentance freely offered you.* This, again, the word "now" suggests. Not only do all the motives of the fully proclaimed gospel press upon you; the aid of the purchased Spirit may be yours. Otherwise, the humiliation and death of Christ would have been all in vain. Motives, alone, of whatever sort, and however arrayed before the mind, are impotent to work contrition. This, perhaps, you are forward to allege. You refer to it as a partial excuse, or you speak of it in a tone of despondency. We admit the fact; yet it aggravates, clearly, rather than lightens your guilt. Motives fail to affect you, not because you lack the faculties essential to moral agency, and which make you responsible, both as a subject of law and as addressed in the gospel. It is simply because of the depth and strength of your depravity. A humiliating fact it is, and one which may well awaken your fears—one which would warrant despair, but for the completeness of the salvation divinely provided. Dark though your

case is, hope still beams upon it. Unconquerable your depravity is by any finite power; yet the Spirit Almighty, the Spirit of all grace, comes to your deliverance. How do all the Persons of the Adorable Trinity pass bebefore you in the appeal of the text—God the Father, as the author of the broken law, and as having given his Son that a place for repentance might be secured—God the Son, as having opened by his death the way of life, and having, nevertheless, been ungratefully and basely rejected by you—God the Holy Spirit, as pitying your guilty impotence, and offering to succor it—yea, with gentle and loving importunity, urging that offer upon you. Oh, yield to this wondrous appeal! Yield to the present pressure of the Spirit upon your heart. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Come, as the first act of penitence, to Christ; and if your heart seem to you still hard, say, as you come,

"Dear Saviour, steep this rock of mine
In thine own crimson sea!
None but a bath of blood divine
Can melt the flint away."

XXII.

RELIGIOUS INSENSIBILITY.

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Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.—Eph. iv. 19.

Emotion is not the characteristic of "a stock or a stone," but it may be predicated of all intelligent beings. God himself has emotions; he feels deeply interested in his fallen and sinful creatures. He is represented, not as wisdom or power, but, in one all comprehensive phrase, as *love*.

There can be no love without emotion—emotion that stirs the heart to its deepest depths.

Man, in this respect, is made after the image of God. He has intellect; he can apprehend truth, but he can also *feel* its power. He can study the character of the Divine Being, he can also feel the force of his claims. This implies the existence of conscience, or a moral nature.

Human feelings are various, and usually exist under the presentation of appropriate objects. An object purely sublime is adapted to awaken the emotion of sublimity—an object of distress, the emotion of pity. Thus of all the feelings which characterize the human heart. They have their origin and counterpart in the external world, either in the world of fiction or fact.

An object, real or imaginary, must be before the eye, or the mind, and the feeling receives its type or character from the nature of the object

A man may, indeed, by education, or evil habits, pervert the great law of sensibility. He may suffer the fires of passion and appetite to rage until his sensibilities are burnt to a crisp. He may disrobe himself of the proper elements of humanity, and so inure himself to scenes of horror, that no cry of distress shall awaken the corresponding emotion of pity in his heart. It is said that Nero, by early acts of cruelty to the inferior animals, schooled himself for his future mission of persecution and blood.

God made our nature full of tenderness and sympathy, and, if we are cold and unfeeling, it shows that some tremendous evil has been at work marring the beauty of our original creation.

These general remarks prepare us to consider a specific class of feelings called moral, or religious.

Having a religious nature, man is susceptible of such feelings, which are superinduced by the presentation of appropriate truth or motives. Such feelings are essential to right moral action. No one ever started in the Christian life without emotion. No one ever cried for mercy until he felt, with the publican, that he was a sinner. Feeling, at this stage, may vary in different individuals, in depth and intensity, according to temperament and habits; but our position is, that feeling, to some extent, must exist before the dawn of spiritual life. The intellect first apprehends, and then the heart feels, the power of divine truth. This is the process, and to deny it is to controvert all Christian experience.

The absence of all religious emotion proves one of both of two things: either a defective perception of moral truth, or a hardened and diseased state of sensi-

bility. Truth, when distinctly perceived, will daguerreotype its image on the soul, unless the moral nature, the conscience and the affections, are strangely perverted. The text is a part of that fearful description which the Apostle gives of the character and condition of the heathen. Sin had produced upon them a moral paralysis, so that there was not only a defective perception of truth, and an alienation from God, but a total inertness and deadness of sensibilities. They were "past feeling," and this was the most hopeless feature in their case. The material, on which the truth had to work, was too hard to be impressed—the fire could not melt it, the hammer could not break it. Oh, there is something terrible in this description. Something that seems to discourage effort, and gathers around its subjects the fearfulness of an eternal doom!

I do not say that we have, among our hearers, a class who answer to this description, who are "past feeling," whom no enginery of truth can affect, whose whole souls are bent into a challenging array, or chilled by a hopeless estrangement from God.

It is in the hope, by divine assistance, of awakening feeling where none now exists, that I am encouraged to come to you with the great messages of mercy, and to speak to you of your peril and guilt.

Signs of Religious Insensibility will be the theme of our present meditation.

I. THE FIRST WHICH I MENTION IS, THE TOTAL FAILURE OF DIVINE TRUTH TO AFFECT THE HEART.

Nothing can be better adapted to awaken emotion, to stir the sensibilities of our nature, than this "glorious gospel of the blessed God." Its truths are so various, so vital, so life-inspiring, so intimately connected with our best good, that it would seem none could resist, none

could remain insensible without doing violence to their better nature. Paul had a proper conception of the appropriateness and efficacy of divine truth to affect the heart, when he spoke of it, as "sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow, a discerner of the thoughts and of the intents of the heart." Analyze this gospel, which is declared to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation," and see if it is not adapted to awaken intense anxiety in relation to the peril and value of the soul. Take its simple statement, so unequivocal, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," that "he that believeth not on the Son is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." Let a man contemplate the great fact of sin, in its nature, in its relations to God, his laws and government, in its consequences to himself, in its polluting and condemnatory power; let him realize into what depths it sinks him, and how it exposes him to the wrath of God and the pains of hell forever, and he must have lost the sensibilities of a man not to be affected by such a view.

If he has feelings or fears, it would seem that they would be excited; if he has any regard for his own well-being, it would seem that he would institute the inquiry, "Wherewithal shall a man cleanse his way, or be just before God?" If, then, this view does *not* affect him, if the clearest demonstration of personal sinfulness and legal exposure leave him in a state of stoicism and moral indifference, is there not reason to fear that the fountain of feeling will never be unsealed, and that he will be left, a congealed monument of religious insensibility?

Take another fact of the gospel, the fact that "God so

loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This, indeed, is the great element of its power. Take Christ from the gospel, and you take away its life-giving energy, and it ceases to be good news and glad tidings to a race of sinners. No light streams through it upon the darkened soul; no softening influence pierces the inner gloom; no invitations from above draw up the sullen mind towards heaven. There is no remedy for sin, and no hope for the sinner but the cross of Christ. And whatever view may be taken of this wonderful plan of deliverance from the curse and pollution of sin, it is preëminently adapted to awaken both fear and hope. The thought that He who hangs upon the cross, and in that hour of darkness and agony clears away every legal obstacle, which stood between us and eternal life, is the Son of God, gives to the work of redemption dimensions we can never compass, and an aspect, I had almost said, *terrific*, on account of its greatness.

Now, what is the design of this gospel presentation? I answer, that you may see your guilt and peril, and that you can be justified only by grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. If *this* aspect of the gospel fail to affect you, what mightier or more touching instrumentality can God apply? Could he give you a more striking exhibition of the evil of sin, or of the fact that there is salvation in none other, than he has done by putting his own Son on the cross? Surely he has told you, in this fact, that there were difficulties so huge and so mighty in the way to heaven, obstacles so many and so high in the way of pardon, enemies so subtle and so strong to human redemption, that none but "God manifest in the flesh," and he too travailing in the greatness of his strength, was sufficient to meet

and overcome them. Oh! tell me, if the salvation of man was not a wondrous, a mighty conception, when, to undertake it, God alone was equal, and when, in the achievement, the man Christ Jesus, sustained as he was by the Divinity, struggles and labors as he does, and sinks in the crisis of his conflict?

There is something amazing in this thought! There is something which gives us an insight into the fearfulness and peril of sin; something which shows us that we cannot gauge the dimensions of that fearfulness, nor form anything like a conception of its peril.

Now, the point of my argument is this: the cross of Christ, viewed either as an illustration of the evil of sin, or as the only remedy for sin, or as an exponent of God's great love, fails to affect you; and if *this* fail, then no truth, no instrumentality can affect, and that, consequently, you are "past feeling," and furnish in your own experience a sad proof that you cannot be saved. Oh! it is a lamentable spectacle to see a sinner unaffacted by the cross!

"If angels weep, it is at such a sight."

If you look at the dealings of God's providence, you see that they are all marked with kindness. If you look to his word, you see that it comes to you freighted with the most *tender* and the most *terrible* appeals. If you look to his Son, you see that he is every way adapted to meet your moral exigencies. Is it possible for him to do more than he has done? Shall I say it? Oh! there is no irreverence in speaking thus, when we wish to magnify the love of God. *He has done his best*, and in giving himself, he has furnished the strongest demonstration of his love, and commended himself to your confidence in the most powerful appeal he could make Could he have stirred the human mind with motives

more startling or thrilling than those presented in his Holy Word?

If, in the work of redemption, God has done what he could, what then shall we say of the *sanctions* by which obedience to the gospel is enforced? Can we conceive of anything more winning, more effective in its captivating influence, than the heaven bought with the blood of Jesus; anything more terrific to the soul than a hell, which must show in its agonies the value of that blood? Oh! can there be a higher spot than that on which the cross of Christ shall stand, or an abyss deeper than that to which the cross shall sink?

When you give a moment's reflection to the theme of redemption, you are startled by its amazing dimensions; but if it is grand, stupendous, and overpowering to the mind, on account of the gift of Jesus Christ, it is no less grand, stupendous, and overpowering, on account of the *motives* by which it enforces the acceptance of that gift.

Now, as yet, these motives have been unavailing in producing that state of feeling essential to your cordial acceptance of Christ. And if the highest conceivable motives are powerless and insufficient, what shall we say of your condition and prospects? Are we not constrained to apprehend that you are "past feeling," when God's best and wisest instrumentalities have left you morally insensible?

There is, however, one more aspect of the gospel, in the light of which I wish to view your condition. The reality of the Spirit's agency is certainly a doctrine of the Scripture. This was the promised gift of Jesus, previous to his leaving his disciples; and his influence is realized in every case of genuine conversion. We are said to be "begotten of the Spirit." We regard this truth as furnishing an illustration of the greatness of the gospel system as striking as any of its other features

That God Himself should thus come down, and, in person, work with his guilty creatures, is an amazing thought!

Here, then, we come again to you with an argument. God could not have done better in this respect than he has done. He could not have employed a wiser, a kinder, a more energetic agency; for he acts in this matter himself. He could not bring an influence to bear upon you better adapted to the result. Now, the point upon which I wish to fasten the minds of my impenitent friends is this—*they all withstand the movements and the strivings of the Holy Spirit.* God has not moved them by the display of the cross; he has not moved them by the motives and the warnings he has addressed to them; he does not move them when he comes home to them *personally*, and brings his mind into contact with theirs. Am I not right in the statement of this proposition? Oh, what would I give to be wrong! It would be a fact of no little moment, could it be proved that you had never resisted the Holy Spirit, and that in his nearest approaches and his tenderest appeals. And if under this divine influence, under this mightiest agency, you are left without feeling, what, I ask, are your prospects and condition? You complain that you have no feeling, and it may be that your complaint is well founded; but could God do more to make you feel? If, under the combined action of the gospel, with the superadded influence of the Holy Spirit, you are still insensible to your guilt and peril, then we fear, we *do* fear, that you are of the number who are "past feeling."

II. I NAME, AS A SECOND MARK OF RELIGIOUS INSENSIBILITY, THE ENTIRE PRE-OCCUPANCY OF THE MIND BY FEELINGS PURELY SECULAR AND WORLDLY.

If a field is covered with briers and thorns, we may look in vain for the blossoms that will ripen into fruit; and thus, if a man's heart is filled with worldly thoughts and aspirings, it becomes poor and most unpromising soil for the introduction of the spiritual seed-grain. The farmer might as well sow his seed by the wayside, where the fowls of the air would devour it up, or in stony places, where there is not much earth, or amid overmastering thorns, as for the spiritual husbandman to scatter broadcast the word of the kingdom among a people, who are all absorbed with the interests and objects of this present world. As often as he retires from his labors will he be constrained, with the prophet, to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" His people are pre-occupied with other matters, the schemings and workings of trade, the show and masquerade of life, and the fret and weariness of a realized or *disappointed* ambition. Much toiling for mere worldly advancement, much popularity, much intercourse in the usages of fashionable society, or much time devoted to the refinements of a soft and luxurious life, do steel the heart against all religious impressions, and leave it totally estranged from God. They come and thrust themselves between a man's soul and the realities unseen; they drop like a veil over the faint outlines of the invisible world and hide it from his eyes. They ring too loudly in his ear, and throw too strong an attraction over his heart, to suffer him either to apprehend or *feel* the spiritual embassies of peace and love. Any ruling worldly affection—be it a love of display, a love of money, or a love of fame—becomes a source of powerful temptation, and a primal cause of serious deterioration of character. It soon stifles the voice of conscience, and when that divine monitor is laid to

sleep, to preach is as powerless as to prophesy over the bones of Ezekiel's vision. The world has eaten its way into the soul, and the ruling passion, whatever it is, so predominates over all the emotions and affections, and so draws the whole mind to itself as to make the man a helpless victim to his besetting sin, and impervious to all the gospel appeals to a spiritual life. It may be said of him, it may be said of *you*, my fellow-men, if this is *your* portraiture, that you are "past feeling, dark monuments of a mind hopelessly abandoned to its idols.

Does not the Apostle's view harmonize with this, when, speaking of the greed of gain, he says, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition? For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

III. I NAME, AS A THIRD MARK OF RELIGIOUS INSENSIBILITY, THE ABSENCE OF FEELING AT PARTICULAR PERIODS IN A MAN'S LIFE.

There are special seasons in every one's history which favor his introduction into the kingdom of God—blessed epochs, when religious feeling would seem to be the most natural and the most inevitable thing in his experience. Sorrow, of whatever kind, is doubtless an original consequence of sin; but under the gracious and redemptive economy, it is a means of discipline and growth in grace. To the impenitent and such as will not obey the truth, it is still, as ever, a dark mystery: to the contrite and obedient, it is as the refiner's fire and the fuller's soap, purging out the imperfections of a fallen nature. To such, "all things work together for good." To them,

every providence has a meaning and a voice. To them, all events and all changes, the open volumes of nature and Revelation, the Sabbath and the Sacrament, stand in the relation of Teachers uttering great words of wisdom and counsel. No less instructive is the voice of providential bereavement. When pain searches into the body or the spirit; when the objects of our earthly love are severed from our embrace, we often feel as though God were speaking to us with peculiar emphasis, awakening deep and tender responses in the heart. When his hand is upon us, we hear with a quickened sense and obey with a readier will. Hence, many can say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I learned thy statutes; or with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." Suffering, in its effects, will be either for good or evil, and if it do not sanctify and win, it will harden and alienate. And when we see you passing through scenes of personal trial, through the furnace of affliction, through bodily suffering, with the hand of God heavy upon you, and you still unmoved, your heart like the burned and barren heath, we do fear lest that which was designed as a savor of life shall prove only a savor of death unto death. Some of you *have* suffered, but you have not learned obedience by the things which you have suffered. You have seen your earthly hopes crumbling to dust and ashes before your eyes, and yet, you have turned with a more clinging fondness to the world. You have gone from the chamber of sickness or the house of mourning or the burial of a friend, only to mingle in the great strife for gain. And when the affliction has come nearer home and the shadows have deepened in your own dwelling, and a child or a beloved companion has been the victim, how speedily

have you emerged from the depression, and cast off fear, and restrained prayer. You were not moved by the lighter trial, and then came the sharper and the heavier. You were not affected by the *ordinary* means of grace, and then God sent the *extraordinary;* and if under this latter dispensation of suffering you remain hardened and impenitent, surely you must be "past feeling," and we can only weep and regret that that which was designed as a blessing should prove only a curse.

There are seasons of *religious refreshing*, when an unusual solemnity rests upon the whole community, when the languishing graces of Christians are revived, and they engage with unwonted fervor and fidelity in all the duties of their high calling, when the tithes and offerings are all brought into the store-house, and the windows of heaven are opened, when the truth preached is attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power from above, and multitudes are disposed to take the kingdom of God by violence and make their calling and election sure. That we are passing through such a favored season none can doubt, unless their hearts are blinded, and they abandoned to the delusions of the most hopeless skepticism. This is manifestly the work of God, not the result of strained and artificial means; not an animal and fevered excitement, which passes away like the morning cloud and the early dew, but a calm movement of the Spirit, subduing human hearts and gathering in a rich and glorious harvest. The earnest laborers in the field have thrust in the sickle, and they may be seen home-returning bringing their sheaves with them.

Now, how have you been affected, my fellow-men, by this blessed outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Some of you I know, have been quickened and raised from a death in sin, and you are no longer "carnal" but "spir-

itual," having a new life in Christ; but many, alas! are still insensible, deaf to the voice of the Spirit, cold and dead as a corpse wrapped in its shroud. See now how God has dealt with you and what he has done for you, and how you have withstood all, and are to-day farther from his kingdom than ever before.

He has plied you with his truth, and brought your mind under the influence of the powers of the world to come. He has sent his Holy Spirit to reason with you of righteousness, temperance, and judgment. He has put a check upon your worldly career by the rod of his chastisement. He would have led you through a rough path and by a "way that is desert," to the very borders of the promised land, "and yet for all this you have sinned still." He has permitted you to pass through a season of special religious interest, and you have heard from the lips of many, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And yet, amid all this bursting glory of a revival, this season of promise and springing freshness, you have put forth no fruit, and exhibited no marks of spiritual life.

Should a farmer thoroughly plough his field, should he carefully sow the seed, should the sunshine and the showers be given in appropriate abundance; and yet, after all his toil and the benefactive influence of Providence, there should be no harvest, the inference would be irresistible that the soil was essentially defective, cold and barren. This, too, strikingly represents the field of your hearts; the good seed has been sown, the kind and blessed influences of heaven have descended, and when we had a right to expect a harvest, lo! the field is all covered with briers and thorns, and is nigh unto cursing. We pity you, and mourn over your guilt and moral insensibility, and say, "Oh! that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would con-

sider your latter end." We regard your condition as one of extremest peril. You are condemned already, and the time of your spiritual decapitation hastens, and yet the prospect excites no dread, awakens no fear. You are like the criminal in his cell, who amuses himself with the rude pictures on the wall, and sports and sings, while the scaffold is erecting, and the preparations are made, and the people are gathering to witness the scene of his execution. We tell you there *is* danger. "And because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with a stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." Could you be aroused to a sense of your condition there would be hope, but it is this dreadful insensibility, which saddens the heart of piety, quenches the spirit of prayer, and throws an aspect of gloom over your eternal prospects.

IV. I NAME, AS A FOURTH MARK OF RELIGIOUS INSENSIBILITY, THE ABSENCE OF RESTRAINT IN PURSUING A LIFE OF SIN.

We live in a world of warnings and restraints. They gather around us from our earliest childhood, in a mother's prayers, in a father's counsels, in the clustering and blessed influence of the Sabbath-school, the sanctuary, the pulpit, and in all the sacred rites of our holy religion. They are heard and felt in the alarm bells of conscience, in the voice of Providence, and in the foreshadowings of eternal retribution. These restraints are not easily broken. They hold us at anchorage, and keep us from drifting out into a dark and unknown sea. They are worn as amulets, to charm away from us the spirits of evil, and not until we divest ourselves of their potent influence can we go to great lengths in sin. Even those far advanced in a career of wrong-doing, will feel their power drawing them back from the verge of peril and perdition.

Now and then you see a man apparently divested of all restraint, and he "sins as it were with a cart rope." The hallowed memories of home, the dying echoes of a mother's prayers, the tender reminiscences of earlier days, stir no tumult in his heart and awaken no earnest longings to return to a better life. He seems spell-bound, perfectly infatuated by the sorceress of evil, and just at this point infidelity often comes in to mingle her drugs in the Circean cup, and the work of ruin is consummated. To reason with him, is to attempt to reason with the fool, who "says in his heart there is no God." He is "past feeling, given over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Lest, my hearers, you should feel that you are not at all included in this description, inasmuch as your outer life is moral and free from the grosser forms of vice, permit me to say, that crime, in the estimation of God, is not confined to specific deeds of villainy, such as debauch and degrade humanity. According to the Scriptural standard, impenitence is a crime; unbelief is a crime; neglect of prayer is a crime; ingratitude is a crime; indifference to the claims of the gospel is a crime; and if you can commit these high offences without remorse and without restraint, it shows that the process of moral hardening is very far advanced. If you can retire from the sanctuary without emotion, after a powerful appeal from the word of God, if you can go away from a communion season unaffected by its touching and irresistible eloquence, you carry with you manifest proofs of the profoundest moral insensibility. You see a manly form prostrate and powerless—the pulse still, the eye sunken and closed, the ear deaf to the calls of affection, and you do not hesitate to affirm that the insensibility of death is there. To the eye of spiritual discernment there are certain signs which indi-

cate the more dreadful insensibility of moral death. It has been our purpose, in this discourse, to spread some of these signs out before you, that you may see, my impenitent friends, your moral condition and prospects. We have seen that you have been successful in maintaining your indifference amid the most powerful exhibitions of gospel truth—that you have suffered your minds to be totally preoccupied with the world—that you have passed through seasons of providential affliction and revival interest without any salutary and abiding impressions—that you cast off fear and restrain prayer, and sin openly with less compunction than formerly; and if these are not indications of a most dreadful and fatal stupor, then we confess that we do not understand the analysis of that state indicated in the text by the phrase, "being past feeling, and given over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

I leave you to judge whether any of you belong to the class described; but if either of these marks fasten upon you, there is reason for alarm; and deep mental agony, and concern for your soul's salvation, are urged upon you by every motive that can appeal to a rational and immortal creature.

REMARKS.

1. *This religious insensibility is not natural, but the result of a gradual and hardening process.*

Nature has made us full of tenderness, with hearts susceptible to the impressions of truth. You have not always been as you now are—thus cold, thus indifferent. Time was when your emotions were easily stirred; when a mother's tender appeal touched you; when you could weep under an affecting discourse; when you could not turn away from the communion table without a struggle

to keep down feeling, and hide the tear just starting to the eye. But these blossoms never ripened into fruit. The spring-time was full of freshness and promise; but "the summer is ended, and the harvest is past, and you are not saved." The process of moral hardness is slow, oftentimes insensible. Little by little the insensibility creeps on, marked by no great changes, much as the dimness of the natural sight, which must reach to an advanced point before it is detected to be more than a passing film. The mind has been impressed from time to time, and you have suffered the impression to wear away; and this constant annealing and cooling process has changed the nature of the original material, and left the heart unchangeably hard—*hard as a nether millstone.* Oh, what a change from the warm and sensitive nature of youth!—a change wrought by your own voluntary rejection of urgent and repeated calls, by saying to God's messenger of mercy, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee," by doing what you are now doing, postponing the settlement of moral issues to an uncertain future. Will you now pause and bring this whole matter to a summary and speedy conclusion? Will you lay these things to heart, and suffer this appeal of love to have its proper influence over you?

In conclusion, I may say a word to those who *do* feel, who are not embraced in the analysis or applications of our text. I rejoice that there are such, whose consciences are quickened to a new and living energy, who are not ashamed or afraid to have it known that their feelings are interested on the great subject of the soul's salvation. Need I say that your position is one of hope and alarm, of promise and of peril. *You may be saved;* you are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet your soul may draw back; you *may* stifle your convictions,

grieve the Spirit, and bring down upon yourselves a double curse. Should you miss salvation now, what a failure! Should you fail to enter the kingdom, now that your feet touch its threshold, what endless criminations would be yours! Oh, *strive* to enter into the strait gate! Jesus is ready to welcome you, to help you, to take the load from your burdened heart. He says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." You may come; you may venture all upon Him. He is *able*, he is *willing*. *Will you come?*

XXIII.

TRUE RELIGION, A SERVICE.

BY ROSWELL D. HITCHCOCK, D.D.,

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Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in Heaven.—St. Matthew, vii., 21.

These words are taken from Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It is in this same discourse that he speaks of the strait gate, and the narrow way, which leadeth unto life; and of the wide gate, and the broad way, that leadeth unto death; seeking evidently to make the impression, that it is an easy thing for us to be lost, and not an easy thing for us to be saved.

The same point is brought to view in a conversation which our Lord had with his disciples near the end of his life, as he was journeying with them for the last time towards Jerusalem. "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." As though his reply had been: Only a few will be saved, and they at the cost of a most intense and bitter struggle. Discipleship is not a thing of ease, but of agony.

And so our Master has put a stern face upon the Christian life. The gateway to it is narrow, and the path is hard; not gently sloping towards the heavens,

but of sharp and wearisome ascent, over the mountains and amongst the clouds; while those who are in it are not a thronging caravan, winding on with joyous music, but a slender line of pilgrims, climbing at once, and fighting, as soldiers who storm a fortress. This is one aspect of the Christian life.

But there are other passages of a much milder and more genial tone. Such, for example, as, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." An utterance, the cadence of which is tremulous and tender with a divine compassion, forbidding distrust, and yearning to save us all. And this is another aspect of the Christian life.

That these two modes of speech, apparently so much at variance, involve really no mutual contradiction, but are only different aspects of one and the same grand economy of life, will be put at once beyond all question, if we but observe the different classes of persons to whom they were addressed. To souls harassed and burdened by the weight of the law, moral and ceremonial, painfully conscious of their own deficiencies, brought to desperation by the scourgings of conscience, and willing to accept any deliverance which God may offer, Christ presents himself as a helping friend. Gentle as a summer breeze, he will break no bruised reed, he will quench no smoking wick. His yoke is easy and his burden light. But to souls once lifted up out of their legal thralldom, and once delivered over into the freedom of the gospel, this same Christ presents himself as a Master, and his word is, "Then ye are my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Equally notable is the seeming contradiction, but real

harmony between Paul and James, both of them speaking of one and the same man, Abraham. "To him that worketh not," says Paul, "his faith is counted for righteousness." "Ye see, then," says James, "how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." "By faith," says Paul; "by works," says James. Martin Luther, seeking to deliver and revive a Church fettered and paralyzed by the medieval heresy, which made faith and works coördinate as the ground of acceptance with God, has no patience with this Epistle of James, calls it "an epistle of straw," and preaches Christ in a strain of well-nigh intemperate and lawless liberty. "The gospel," he says in his trenchant style, "preaches nothing of the merit of works; he that says that the gospel requires works for salvation, I say flat and plain, is a liar." But this first conflict being over, the thralldom broken, and the life renewed, those who follow Luther proclaim once more the necessity of works. "We never dream," says Calvin, "either of a faith destitute of good works, or of a justification unattended by them." And there is falsehood in neither of these statements; nor any real contradiction between them. Only the truth has a double front. Facing towards formalism, its front is grace. Facing towards the conscience of a pardoned sinner, rejoicing in hope, its front is good works.

Such is the law of utterance on this subject as established by Christ himself, observed by his apostles, observed by the great champions of the Protestant Reformation, and demanding to be observed by us. Addressing the unregenerate, who writhe under the bondage of evil, and are pining to be delivered, our message is, "Believe and be saved." But the moment belief is rendered, and the deliverance achieved, while yet the eyes are streaming with grateful tears, and the shout of

triumph is bursting from the lips, we confront the jubilant disciple with these stern words of our Redeemer: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

To the latter class of persons, the ransomed and the rejoicing, is my errand now. I come to speak not of grace, but of duty, not of faith, but of works, not of the sweet beginnings of the Christian life, in the midst of which we may stand and shout, but of the far-reaching, rugged, and upward path, along which the bugle calls us to march and struggle for our crown.

Our text, it will be observed, is in close connection with what was said of the strait gate, and the narrow way. And few, few there be that find it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father, which is in heaven." As to the exact meaning of these words, it may be remarked, that to call Christ, Lord, is to acknowledge him as the Messiah; and by the repetition of the address, Lord, Lord, it is indicated, that the acknowledgment is a zealous and fervent one. In a word, the head is orthodox, and the heart, apparently, is warm. And yet this correct and glowing acknowledgment of Christ as the Messiah, however emphatic and however fervid, is not sufficient to save the soul. As for the orthodoxy of it, the devils also believe. And as for the fervor of it, self-deception is as easy as the heart is deceitful above all things. Any man, of course, will think he loves Christ, if he only imagines that Christ will save him; while, after all, it is not Christ that he loves, but only his own soul, selfishly sighing and scheming to have it saved. Neither right beliefs, therefore, nor lively emotions of joy and gratitude, are enough. There is also something to be done; there are self-denials to be endured

there is a warfare to be waged; a life-long service to be accomplished. In short, we are to be saved, through Christ, not by our beliefs, nor by our feelings, but by our lives; by what we are, as embodied in what we do. Religion is not a dogma, nor an emotion, but a service. Our Redemption is not of the head alone, nor of the heart alone, but preëminently, and most decisively of the life, as the only infallible criterion of what we really are. It is to the elucidation and enforcement of this important truth that your attention is now invited.

I. In the first place, let us be warned against making our religion a matter merely of opinion.

It is implied in our text, that there were persons amongst the Jews who acknowledged Christ as the Messiah, perhaps had joined themselves to his company and yet were not his genuine disciples. They were persuaded of his Divine authority and mission, on many points understood and relished his teachings, but were not the subjects of his grace. Some of this class fell away from their discipleship as the instructions of the Master deepened. As for example, on that memorable occasion, when our Lord told his hearers, that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood, in order to have eternal life; which so scandalized many of his disciples even, that, as John relates, they "went back and walked no more with him." While others, probably, who withstood this shock of staggering doctrine, may have quailed and fainted under the storm of persecution, which presently began to rage.

Similar instances abound in the history of the Christian church. Multitudes have joined themselves to the people of God, to all appearance savingly impressed by Christian truth, and running well for a time, only at length to fall off into heresy and schism, and lose their souls. Other multitudes, who were far

enough from any heresy of doctrine, have yet been Christians only in their opinions, disciples of the man of Nazareth only as of some master in philosophy, with no renewal of the heart and no radical transformation of the life.

In our day, the number of such mere speculative believers is doubtless large. The religion of Christ, in its course over the globe, and down through history, has been winning for itself a fullness and force of demonstration which now almost compels the reverence of a thinking mind. The infidelity, which, in Bishop Butler's day, would scarcely stoop to entertain with seriousness the great questions of our Christian faith, has since then been obliged to entertain these questions, and, with humbled crest, has been fairly routed from the field. Into many spheres has the strife been carried, and in many forms of assault have our lines been tried; but always, and at every point, with the same discomfiture of the assaulting host. The Apologists of the early centuries vanquished only single champions of error; now, whole battalions are dissolving before the breadth and vigor of our charge. In all the higher walks of learning, as in all the better walks of life, room has been made for Christianity as an established and honored fact. So that the general current of opinion in most of the Christian countries of the world is distinctly Christian. Amongst the kingdoms of the earth, established for earthly ends, there stands acknowledged a kingdom of truth and grace, which is destined to outlast them all. That would be regarded but a blind philosophy of history, which should fail to make the person of Christ the centre of its radiating lines. And that would be regarded but a chattering and impotent philanthropy, which should dream of any other millennium of peace and righteousness than the one promised in the Scriptures.

Such, we say, are now the sentiments of wise and thoughtful men. Their only hope for the world is in the religion of Christ. They acknowledge Him as the only possible Redeemer of a stricken and suffering race. And how many may be resting indolently in such a hope, and taking credit to themselves for such an acknowledgment, making Christian opinions a substitute for Christian experience, God only knows. But I am afraid there are many such. It is a singular device of Satan, this of making the sublimest of truths an opiate, rather than a stimulant to the human will; a singular delusion, this of mistaking the assent of the understanding for the renewal of the heart; the sinful human soul calmly measuring, and, it may be, profoundly admiring, the redemptive economy of the Gospel, without advancing to a personal acceptance of it; standing by the side of his blessed Bethesda of heavenly grace to applaud its miracles of healing, and yet never stepping in. We speak with pride, sometimes, of our puissant Christendom, so industrious, so intelligent, so moral, with its ubiquitous commerce, its adorning arts, its halls of learning, its happy firesides, and its noble charities. And yet, what is our vaunted Christendom but a vast assemblage of believing but disobedient men? The so-called Christian nations, in what one of them all is there more than a feeble fraction of truly regenerated and praying men? Our Christian Sabbath congregations gathered to hear the gospel, in which of them are not the real followers of Christ outnumbered by more than two to one? Judged of by merely outward tokens, Christianity would seem to be in the ascendant. Imperial edicts no longer assail her thickening ranks, the proudest philosophies have gone down before her doctrines, and the boundaries of heathendom are steadily retreating wherever she plants her invading foot. But these outward tokens are de-

ceptive. They indicate the acceptance of Christianity as an opinion, a polity, a culture, while they fail to witness for the acceptance of it as an inward, spiritual, renovating force. The gospel-preacher, stand where he will, is sure of a respectful, perhaps an applauding, audience; but the chiefest burden of his message is not regarded, and the chiefest longing of his heart is not realized. The cross of Christ is no offence to the understanding of his hearers, but their pround wills are not bowed before it. He faces a masked battery of most orthodox, but most resolute impenitence.

But this is not the worst of it. Within the church itself, obviously enough, there are many persons, with whom belief is made a substitute for something deeper and better. Of such preëminently are those knights-errant of orthodoxy, who ride up and down, vexing the age with the shibboleths of their artificial and arbitrary creeds. But not these alone. The number is not small of such as are unconsciously lifting the dogma above the life. The intellect arranges for itself, in admirable proportions, the whole system of revealed truth, propounds, in careful statements, its doctrine of Man, its doctrine of God, its doctrine of Redemption, and then pauses in admiration of the imposing structure, or goes about to praise it and recommend it, mis taking thought for feeling, opinion for experience, doctrine for life. The glow experienced is of the intellect. Sin, indeed, is acknowledged and emphasized; the throne of God planted firmly upon its pillars of righteousness, overlooking, without a stain upon it, all this weltering chaos of human evil; and redemption is hailed as the wisdom of God, mediating sublimely between his outraged law and his pitying love. All this may lie in clearest vision before the soul without stirring its depths. Sin may have its enormity measured in spe-

culation without being bitterly repented of and forsaken. God and his ways may be justified without being loved. The plan of salvation through atoning blood, may be saluted as a grand solution of a stupendous moral problem, without being made the stay of hope; welcomed as a relief to reason, but not applied as a healing power to the wounded heart. Said William Law to John Wesley: "The head can as easily amuse itself with a living and justifying faith in the blood of Jesus, as with any other notion." It is even so. A truer word, pointed in warning against a greater peril, was never uttered. The mistake in question is a very subtle one, but very serious, and more common than, perhaps, we think.

As thus of the doctrines, so also of the duties of our religion. These duties may be objects merely of belief, arrayed in well-ordered systems, and acknowledged to be the proper code of life, without being actually reduced to practice. The study of God's word, the keeping of holy time, prayer and praise, a clean heart and a clean life, with self-denying exertions, in all feasible and hopeful ways, for the good of others, may all be clearly recognized as Christian duties, without being discharged. The most sacred duty may thus decay into a dogma, asking only to be believed. "I go, sir," answered the son in the parable, "but went not."

II. In the second place, let us be warned against making our religion a matter merely of feeling.

Of this also there is danger. In the life-time of our Redeemer, as we have seen, there were those who not only acknowledged him as the Messiah, but were forward and demonstrative in that acknowledgment; and yet were no true disciples of his. Right in doctrine, and right, apparently, in feeling, still they knew him

not, nor he them. Their language was not merely Lord, but Lord, Lord; and yet, after all, they perished, neither the orthodoxy of their belief nor the seeming fervor of it, availing to save them.

Very painful it is to think, how many there may have been, down through all the Christian centuries, who have wholly misjudged in regard to their own spiritual state. Of sheer, deliberate hypocrisy, there has not been so very much; certainly not, if the entire course of our Christian history be taken into the account. At times, no doubt, hypocrisy has abounded, as under despotisms like that of Theodosius, which have adopted Christianity as the religion of the State, making the profession of it indispensable to civil office and emolument, and fencing it about with pains and penalties. But here with us, where Church and State are as utterly divorced as they ever can be, and society has pledged itself that no man shall be challenged for his faith, there is almost no motive whatever for a false profession. We have neither the soil nor the climate for so noxious a weed. Now and then, for private reasons, religion may be counterfeited, but such cases are extremely rare. Most of those amongst us who belong to the church, without belonging to Christ, are the victims of self-deception. They fondly imagine themselves the subjects of a work of grace, which has never been accomplished. They are deceiving others, only because they have first deceived themselves.

There may be, no doubt, what passes for real penitence, and a real joy in Christ, but which, in fact, is wholly a delusion. What seems to be a godly sorrow for sin, may be nothing more than remorse; and what seems to be peace and joy in believing, nothing more than the selfish exultation of the soul in its imagined deliverance from the wrath to come. The peril at this

point is prodigious, having its root and nourishment in our sensitive nature, so eager and clamorous for peace and safety, so open to torture from the apprehension of coming evil—a peril enhanced, too, it may be, by the very endeavors which are made by preachers to arrest the attention of the careless, and persuade them to seek in season for the way of life. If selfishness be the very essence of sin, then there is a kind of inevitable contradiction between *saving* the soul, and *seeking* to save it. Only he that loses his life ever finds it. Only that sorrow for sin is genuine, which rises above ourselves, and is measured by that infinite majesty, against which the sin was committed. A willingness to be damned, as the only sufficient test of our fitness to be saved, is, indeed, a monstrous heresy, which I cannot think of indorsing; and yet it points towards one of the profoundest and most precious of Christian truths. It points us away from ourselves to God, and summons us to sink all our own little personal solicitudes, whether for time or eternity, in the bottomless depth of an awful reverence and love for his authority and honor. And those who know nothing of this experience, who are conscious only of being anxious to be saved, may be very sure that they are still in bondage to evil; the seeming repentance being only a fear of penalty, the seeming delight in Christ, only gratitude in advance for expected benefits.

But even the truly regenerate are not wholly free from peril in this matter. There are different types of piety, of different degrees of purity. What is not a delusion, but a reality, may yet be vitiated. The selfish element may intrude and poison it. Religion may come to be looked upon too much as a round or series of emotions, and the proof of its presence sought for too exclusively in the vividness and vigor of these emotions.

The soul, instead of going out of itself after Christ, looking away to his cross, and upwards to his crown, searches within itself for the warrant of its hopes. The very phrase so current amongst us, "an *experience* of religion," indicates this error. The work of grace, which, as it comes from God, should go out after him, throbbing with a divine pulse, sinks down and terminates too much within us. We make it a thing of feeling, which, from its very nature, may be delusive; or, if genuine, comparatively meagre and fruitless. There transpires within us an experience which is named repentance; another which goes by the name faith; another which is known as hope, while over all there plays the wing of a lightsome joy. And if these experiences can only be brought to pass in their proper order and intensity, the soul is tempted to reckon itself in a thriving state. The first beginning of these experiences is hailed as the birth of grace, and every subsequent repetition of them, with sensibly freshened fervor, a reviving of God's work. Thus religion, which should be a solid structure, to the praise of divine grace, becomes an unsubstantial thing of inward moods, afloat upon the changeful tide within us, uplifted or depressed as our feelings rise or ebb.

In our own country, the danger of mistake in this direction is great. With all our constitutional shrewdness of intellect, and homely, practical common sense, we are yet an excitable people. Our keen, stimulating climate; our vast continent, provoking to boundless enterprise; the perpetual fluctuations of our social life; the very constitution of our government, involving such frequent appeals to the masses, all conspire to give us a character not unlike that of the old Athenian democracy, as it was in the day when Paul addressed it on the Acropolis. We are also a religious people. The infi

delity of France was offered us, but refused; as we shall also refuse the infidelity now offered us by Germany. That we are Protestant as well as religious, is evinced by the multitude of sects amongst us, more than fifty in all. And, above all, this has been preëminently the land of revivals, partly the product and partly the cause of what we are. These revivals have been the wonder of Europe;—glorious works of divine grace, as cannot be doubted, and yet encouraging a type of piety which has its defects and its perils. The danger has been, and is, that our religious life may be disproportionably emotional, running up into fever heats, only to run down into ague chills.

This piety of moods and feelings, which goes by spasms, and not by the even pulses of a robust life, is not the sort of piety we need, my hearers. It dishonors our Master, who has something larger to do for us than simply to make us happy in our religion. It wrongs our own souls, which ought to be looking higher than their own enjoyment. It defrauds a world burdened with woes, and perishing for lack of vision, which asks something more of us than prayers and psalms.

III. Finally, let us be moved to make our religion a matter of the life; finding the test and measure of our discipleship, neither in what we believe, nor in what we feel, but in what we are, as announcing itself in what we do.

Not that we counsel the disparagement of Christian doctrine. We do not forget that it is through the truth, though not by it, that men are to be sanctified and saved. Christianity is, and must be, doctrine, or it cannot be at all. There must be religious opinions, more or less clearly defined, conditioning the religious life; and the more clearly defined, the better. There must

be an opinion about the native character of man; an opinion about the person and work of Christ; an opinion about the ground and mode of our acceptance with God. And the nearer we come to the teachings of Scripture, as interpreted by the Christian consciousness of the successive generations of believers, the nearer we come to those grand settlements of doctrine effected by the great expounders of doctrine, as Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards, the nearer shall we come to the hidings of Christian power.

Neither would we disparage religious feeling. The new life has its beginning in feeling; while to be past feeling, is the surest mark of reprobation. It is impossible for a man to be convinced of sin by the Spirit of God, without being profoundly agitated. An accusing conscience lashes the soul, as a tempest lashes the ocean. And equally impossible is it to find relief in believing, without a fervid gush of triumphant and grateful emotion. A religion wholly without excitement, would be a body without a pulse, a sea without tides or winds, a morning without sunlight and the songs of birds.

But our text, while it slurs neither doctrine, nor feeling, points us beyond them to the life. Not every one that saith unto Christ, Lord; not even every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord; but only he that serves him, is his disciple indeed. Not belief, not emotion, but obedience, is the test. Mere belief would make religion a mere theology. Mere emotion would make it a mere excitement. While the true, divine idea of it, is a life, begotten of grace in the depths of the human soul, subduing to Christ all the powers of the soul, and incarnating itself in a patient, steady, sturdy service. In short, it is the doing of the will of the Father, which entitles us to a solid assurance of our redemption by the Son. Doing this will, we say; not preaching it, as

something which ought to be done; not indolently sighing to do it, and then lamenting that we do it not; but the thing itself, in actual achievement, from day to day, from month to month, from year to year. Thus religion rises on us in its own imperial majesty. It is no mere delight of the understanding in the doctrines of our faith; no mere excitement of the sensibilities, now harrowed by fear, and now jubilant in hope; but a warfare and a work, a warfare against sin, and a work for God. And so our thoughts, our cares, our aims, get shifted away from ourselves to a worthier centre. We look not within ourselves, but above us, for the guiding word; while the roots of our Christian hope are nourished more by our duties than our joys. Under every burden of service, in every weariness of marching, in every peril of battle, as shouted the old Crusaders, so shout we, "It is the will of God."

What, then, is God's will? So far as we ourselves are concerned, this is the will of God, says an apostle, even our sanctification. That we advance in holiness, subduing our sins; that we grow every day more pure, more true, more fruitful, more like Christ, our pattern—this is the will of God concerning us. It is the making our religion, not an entertainment, but a service. We are to set before us the perfect standard, and then struggle to shape our lives to it. Personal sanctity must be made a business of. Those saints of the middle ages, like Tauler and A'Kempis, who wrestled so hard for holiness, slaying so sternly their bosom sins, and looking so meekly, yet so fixedly, to Christ, may well be invoked as the rebukers of our sloth. It is at just this point that the piety of our day is the most sadly defective. It is not sufficiently inflamed with a desire after sanctity. It is self-indulgent, where it ought to be self-denying; tolerant of impurities and infirmities, of which it ought to

be utterly intolerant; cold and slack, where it ought to be warm and diligent; asleep over faults of character, and in the presence of spiritual dangers, which ought to awaken a godly jealousy and a godly fear. It is true, we are saved by hope; and yet it is equally true, that he who hath this hope in him should purify himself, as Christ is pure. In a word, it is character that is required of us; laid, indeed, in grace, and imperfect, at the best, needing to shelter itself behind the perfect righteousness of Christ, and yet a piece of solid moral masonry, to be carried on, and carried up, by a life-long toil. And this, too, not for our own sake, but for Christ's sake, and because God so wills it. Our own spiritual comfort, the sure fruit of a careful walk with God, though an incident, is not to be the end of our endeavors; but all we do, is to be out of simple loyalty to redeeming love. Mere obedience to conscience, is but a Pagan virtue, which, in the highest sphere, is not a virtue at all. Virtue, for us, is obedience to God in Christ. Painstaking, of course, it will be, that there may be no blot upon the life; self-denying, as against our indolence, our appetites, and our passions; asking only for duty, though we knew it were asking for martyrdom; and all for Christ. Such is the will of God concerning us; and only he who does it should reckon himself a child of God.

But besides this resolute endeavor after personal sanctity, we have duties also towards our Christian brethren. The Fellowship of the Saints, the Church Catholic on earth, under whatever names or forms, as widely reaching as Christendom itself, these are the only permitted boundaries of our love. Wheresoever Christ has gone with his quickening grace, there must we also follow with the mantle of Christian charity. They who love a common Lord, must love each other. The essen

tial oneness of the Church is now no longer visible. The outward communion is broken. First, the Orient and the Occident fell apart, eight hundred years ago. Three hundred years ago, the Occident was divided. And since then the sects have multiplied, till we are almost ashamed to number them. These sects proclaim, indeed, not the decay, but the vitality and the growth of our Lord's kingdom; and yet its ripest life is in that future which shall restore the seamless garment. Meanwhile, we have only to tax our charity the more and give it an impulse, which shall force it over the dividing lines. And yet each one of us must be loyal to his own communion, knitting himself the closest with those to whom he stands the nearest. The local church, with which we may happen to be connected, has special claims upon us. We owe it a heavy debt of service; not on the Sabbath only, when we assemble for worship and instruction, but in all its humbler gatherings for prayer and praise, and in all the channels of its life.

Nor is this all. The will of God concerning us has a wider sweep even than the church; it embraces the world. This world lieth in wickedness; only one-fifth of it even nominally Christian, all the rest of it Heathen, Jewish, Mohammedan, in need of Christ, and perishing because it knows him not. There is more between us and it than the tie of a common human brotherhood. This scene of moral ruin is the inheritance of our Lord, made over to him in the covenant of redemption. For this world he died, making an atonement sufficient for all its sins; and over it he bends in mercy from his throne of grace, entreating its return to God. This weaves for us a new bond of relationship, firmer and more sacred than that of a common descent from Adam.

The ministry of reconciliation, commenced by our Lord himself, is now committed to his followers. They

are now his ambassadors, as he, in his ministry, was the ambassador of God the Father. There is, indeed, a special ministry of the word, beginning with the Apostles, descending from them to us who are now preachers of righteousness, and destined to endure to the end of time. But there is also a wider ministry of the universal brotherhood of believers. Mere discipleship is also, in some sort, an apostleship. We are all of us ambassadors of Christ. Just so soon as we are brought, by the grace of God, to a saving knowledge of the gospel, we are called to be dispensers of it to others; taking first those who are nearest to us, but pausing not till we have touched the farthest boundaries of the globe. The medieval piety, so admirable in some respects, was defective in this, that it did no more for a dying world. The Reformers were hindered, by the abundance and urgency of their work at home, from undertaking any service upon heathen shores. But an ardent missionary zeal, the harbinger, as we trust, of the millennium, is now kindling in the bosom of the church. And the time is near at hand when not a soul that rejoices in a Christian hope will be excused, or will wish to be excused, from laboring for other souls. There is enough for us all to do. Even in these Christian cities there is a frightful waste of heathenism, weltering at our very feet. We must subdue it to the cross of Christ. Over the seas are millions of heathens, darkening the continents. To them also must we send the light of life. Such is the commandment of our Lord. Such is the service laid upon us, to be the test and measure of our faith.

I have thus endeavored as plainly as possible to unfold and set before you, my hearers, our blessed Lord's own definition of a true discipleship. At any time the theme would be important, but is doubly so just

now. The scenes through which we are passing are without a parallel in the religious history of our country, perhaps we may say without a parallel in the religious history of the world. After a season of comparative declension, lasting for nearly thirty years, during which the power of the gospel seemed somehow to be strangely hindered, if not, as infidelity was boasting, essentially and permanently crippled, all at once, with a suddenness equalled only by that of the commercial disasters which went before it, a work of gospel grace has commenced which is astonishing the world. Spreading from heart to heart, it has covered the land, leaping the boundaries of States, as fire leaps fences upon a prairie. It has gone out upon the sea; and on the decks of ships sailing homewards from distant ports, the knees of hardened offenders have been bowed in prayer. It has reached hundreds, if not thousands, of men who had not previously been reached by the voice of any human preaching. The work is marvellous alike in its origin, in its extent, and in its method. By many tokens we know it to be the work, not of man, but of God. We may be mistaken, but it now appears as if we were crossing the threshold of a new stadium in our religious history; as if the world was about to be laid open, as never before, to the regenerating power of the gospel.

But the occasion has its embarrassments and its perils. It is feared by many that the work now in progress is lacking in evangelical depth, and is marked by an intensity of mere emotional excitement, which is destined to be followed by a sad relapse. So it happened in our country a little more than a hundred years ago. Within ten years after the Great Awakening, in 1740, as described by Bellamy, there appeared a declension as remarkable as the excitement which went before

it. A similar reaction, though not so violent, followed the revival of thirty years ago.

If now we may venture to hope for a better issue, it must be on the basis of a better experience, on the basis of a better appreciation of the real genius of a true discipleship. We must have the gospel pattern of piety held up before us. Our religion must be more to us than a mere opinion, more than a mere excitement of feeling; it must be a resolute and manly service. Our whole life, from its inmost feelings to its outmost ongoings, must be subdued to Christ. Personal sanctity, which dreads a blot upon itself, as it dreads the anger of God; love for the church of Christ, which many waters of strife cannot quench, nor floods drown; with labors, wise, earnest, self-denying and abundant, for the souls of perishing men; all these must we lay as a cheerful tribute at the feet of the King of kings.

XXIV.

THE LIFE BATTLE.

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Fight the good fight of faith.—1 Timothy vi. 12.

Probation is a battle—a continuous life-battle, which terminates only in death. Some there are who do not recognize this fact, who feel and act as if no conflict were required of them, simply accepting, as the rule of their lives, their own impulses and the suggestions of their enemies. Some who know the fact that there is a life-battle, yet decline the strife, and fall as the result of their own passive indolence, or of unrecognized secret alliance with their own foes. Some rush into the fight with no adequate idea of the character, number, or power of their foes, with no adequate preparation to meet them, and fall ingloriously, the victims of their own temerity. But there are others who recognize and accept the conflicts of probation with a heart of deep humility, and with firm reliance upon Almighty Power. They survey well the field; they measure skillfully the dimensions of every foe; they nobly furnish themselves for the contest; they fight the battle in the true spirit of heroism, and receive at last the victor's crown from the hands of the omniscient Judge.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE PARTIES AND THE STRIFE.

1. *The spirit's battle with the body.*

The soul has a contest with the senses of the body. They are too limited for its demands. They examine surfaces, but the soul would urge them to penetrate into the centres of globes and systems. They look upon developments, but the soul would send them out to discover agencies producing those developments. They look upon facts; the soul urges them to find laws, including, and governing, and using those facts. They look upon effects, but the soul insists upon tracing those effects to their primary causes. Hence it should be stated, generally, that man's spirit-nature is not satisfied with the perceptions which arise naturally out of the constitution of the body and the mind. These are all circumscribed; their limits are too narrow for the soul's aspirations, and when these organs of sense become impaired the contest is still greater, the dissatisfaction is more marked, there being always, within the living spirit, an earnest desire, and struggle, to extend the sphere, and stimulate the power of the senses.

But the contest is also with the appetites of the body. These were intended for the preservation of life, to be the means of repairing the wastes of the body in its organic forms and powers. They, nevertheless, demand time which the soul feels it can hardly spare for their gratification. It is often difficult for the mind, by the exercise of its reason, of its skill, of its energy and endurance, to make the provisions which they require; so much so, that even in the ordinary exercise of the appetites, a very large portion of the soul's probation is devoted to the preparation of material to supply this demand. Appetite, in its artificial action, becomes a more decided enemy of the soul. The spirit-nature is called upon to surrender its reason, to lay aside interests

of the highest importance, for the gratification of appetites, stimulated by fond indulgence, until the mind's ingenuity, and untiring energies, are taxed to their utmost to gather the material to meet the wants of an appetite which is not in accordance with the designs of the Creator, which does not belong to the original conformation of the body; an appetite which, having been formed by art, requires the most artificial means for its gratification.

But especially in the most morbid condition of the appetites does the spirit find a strong antagonism to its legitimate exercise and its appropriate mission. In this form the appetites rise far above even ordinary artificial demands, and require indulgence at the expense of health, of moral position, of moral character; at the expense of the intellect, of personal and social condition, of the dearest hopes, however long and fondly cherished.

The soul, in the meantime, so far as it is permitted to have legitimate action, and understand its high destiny, aspires to more elevated employment. It demands, in opposition to a morbid appetite, that the purposes of life shall take in the formation of character, the correction of personal and social evils, and the construction of a wholesome and useful future, with a wise reference to an eternal state. Who that has felt the risings of desire, who that has felt the strange spell of a morbid appetite, and yet has had an eye open upon the devastations which such appetites have produced, and upon the results of a conquest over them, can fail to recognize the conflicts to which we are referring, and to allow that the spirit's battle with the appetites of the body is a contest of exceeding difficulty; likely to be long protracted; a contest in which it is the right of the soul to conquer?

We must also recognize the spirit's battle with the fixed local condition of the body. The body is restricted to a very narrow sphere. In its locomotion it can pass over only a small portion of a single globe, and consequently of itself it opposes the mind's longings for researches in fields beyond these narrow limits. Held down to the surface of earth by its own gravity, the body does not permit the soul to go where it desires to go, to examine what it desires to examine, to realize its own enlargement, and gratification, nd usefulness, within the sphere of its unfettered pow ɜ, in the vast universe of matter and of mind.

The body detains the soul n its quest of truth. In the toils to which the min is adjusted, the labors which belong to the spirit's nission upon this earth, the body wearies and declines to obey the mandates of the soul; the soul urges it forward until it utterly refuses to advance, and lies down to its slumbers. If the body would permit it, the mind would presently visit every spot upon this planet; it would then soar away to neighboring orbs, and visit distant stars, and explore the vast dominions of God. If it were allowed, it would enter the habitation of the great Jehovah, and observe the manifestations of spirit-natures. It would gaze upon an angel's form, and listen to an angel's voice, and know the sweetness of a cherub's smile, and hear the glad acclamations of ransomed ones in the world inhabited only by spirits and resurrection bodies. If there were no detention by this gross material body, mind would soon behold what are the manifestations to the spirit-eye of the Triune Deity; in what way the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost reveal their unity and their trinit and in what manner the triune God maintains an ' nitely perfect government in such unity as perfect · ɜness alone can render possible, and yet in

such distinctness of relations as the great acts of redemption require, as are adapted to the advancement of the minds redeemed by the blood of Christ, in personal excellence, until they realize the end for which they were created.

All this would the mind discover, but the body holds it here, and thus restricts its sphere of investigation.

2. *Let us refer to the spirit's battle with itself.*

This contest is, first, with ignorance. The soul is furnished by the Creator with the beginnings of knowledge. It has conceptions, however, of fields unexplored. There are truths that are infinite in nature, in the works of God, but the ignorance of the soul hides those truths from its own vision. Every attempt to study natural laws, to master the principles of natural science, is the spirit's battle with its own ignorance. How formidable the contest is, none but the thorough student and the wise scholar can properly understand.

There are truths of exceeding interest in the soul itself; in its laws of existence, its laws of thought, its laws of passion, its laws of purpose; and these truths are objects of special consideration. How profound, however, is the ignorance of the soul, with regard to these laws! and what weary hours and years of study are required to identify and define even those which seem most superficial and easy of comprehension!

There are truths of vast importance in the structure, relations, and power of languages; in the exact, sciences; in the philosophy of being; in the spiritual natures that move about us unseen; in the character of the great God. With what pleasure do we gaze upon any of these truths when they are first introduced to our notice, when our industry or our perseverance uncovers them; and how constantly increasing is the conviction, that there are yet infinite fields of truth in

the scientific world of which the best scholar has no distinct conception.

All the public schools, all the academic institutions, all the colleges and universities, all the toils of professors, all the struggles of an enlightened philanthropy, and of an elevated civilization, in the department of education, are so many battles with the ignorance of the soul—are the methods in which the soul carries on its contest with this formidable foe. Whatever is brought to the notice of the mind with regard to moral obligations, either in the world of ethics or of theology, enters into this life-struggle with ignorance. Every sermon, every lecture, every product of the press, upon whatever theme, is an effort to triumph over this enemy of human happiness; and the part which for his own improvement each man takes in any of these general exertions, is so far a battle with himself.

Again; let me ask your attention to the spirit's battle with its own dullness. The soul as well as the body tires in its investigations of truth, in its attempts to discover great and fundamental principles and practical laws, which are operating upon the individual life and social order everywhere around us. Exhausted in its toils, it refuses to press on to the apprehension of truths which seem to be just at hand. Every student, every scholar, every thinking man, knows what I mean when I suggest, that there are often glimpses of truths, rich in beauty and high in interest, which seem to be just at hand; and as the soul longs and resolves to grasp them, it finds upon trial that it wants clearness of perception and force of thought sufficient for the achievement. It renews the struggle again and again, only to feel that the things which it desires to know it does not know, and perhaps never will know. Not unfrequently the

search is commenced and carried on from early morning, in earnest, deep, and candid thought, to bring out some important principle or law that governs the physical or metaphysical world, or the social state, or that relates to the harmony of spirit-natures, and to the accomplishment of man's mission here; and the day wears away, and the delving mind, when it has gone to the extent of its powers, finds itself still dealing only with the conditions of those grand discoveries. The midnight hour comes on while yet only partial manifestations of the truth are before the inquiring intellect; and the man of thought throws himself down weary to repose, because his energies are exhausted.

How strange this contest with the dullness of the soul, with its fatigued and worn condition! How many have said: "Oh, that I could rouse myself for another contest; oh, that I could command clearness of thought and energy of application for another hour. If my mind could but be reinvigorated and I could enter once more into the conflict, I could bring out the pure sparkling truth that is almost within my reach, and gather from the world of thought and principles before me one glorious, enduring structure, that the eyes of souls would gaze upon with admiration forever." However grand the achievements of the consecrated intellect, its hours of strength and its life in the body are too short for the triumphs to which it aspires.

But the principal contest of the spirit with itself is with its depravity. To express the truth in the plainest manner, there challenges now your consideration that strange and all-pervading fact, that man in character and action is a sinner, and that sin exists in the form of depravity—depravity of character and action—depravity that pervades the world, and, instead of permitting men's passions to become sources of pure impulses

renders them morbid and vicious, so that they seek not their pleasure in legitimate objects, but rather in those forbidden; stimulating their desires until they overleap the bounds of health and decency, and exact for their gratification the honor of others, and, under the control of deeply vitiated emotions and desires, reaching into the rightful sphere, and attacking the prerogatives of others, they bear down with them for the gratification of the hour, the lovely, the brilliant, and the great, and crush the dearest and purest hopes of humanity.

Such is the condition of men's passions, such the results of depravity as it naturally develops itself in the fallen soul—a depravity that controls the natural and moral sensibilities of men, that takes hold of the conscience and passes up into the dominion of the intellect, and darkens what would otherwise be clear, and paralyzes what would otherwise be powerful in the conflicts of life—a depravity which, in its perpetual increase, allows no decision of the will to be a decision of true interest, governed by the true relations of the individual according to the plans and purposes of God—a depravity that expresses itself in language, that speaks in the eye, that comes out in the flush upon the cheek, that indicates itself in the dissoluteness of a corrupted mind, and that reveals itself in disregard of law, in disregard of social public rights, that gnaws at the very vitals of human happiness.

Now, tell me, what is to be done with such a depraved condition and depraved action of a moral and immortal nature. The spirit was not formed for such a sphere of thought, and feeling, and action, but for a higher, purer, nobler realm of enjoyment and usefulness, a brighter world of purity and love, of spiritual labor and delight. There must be a contest with this depravity. Resistance to it is one of the first laws of self-preservation.

Resistance to this unnatural demand becomes the law of honor to a gentleman, the law of purity to society—becomes the law of social health and social development, the safeguard of man in his march to eternity.

See now, when the soul is prompted to spiritual exercises, how its depravity drags it down to earth; when it has gracious aspirations for virtue, how they are antagonized by inward propensities to vice; how the soul is degraded to the worship of the creature instead of the Creator! Even when all the convictions are for the right, the depravity of the soul is against it—sternly and persistently against it. Long and fearful is this conflict; painful doubts attend it every hour until the victory is achieved through evangelical power.

One item more in this part of the discussion. I ask you to examine the spirit's battle with its acquired infidelity—I say acquired infidelity, because it does not belong to the original constitution of mind to disbelieve the truth of God or to reject the scheme of divine redemption. Truth was made for the soul and the soul for truth, as light for the eye and the eye for light, as the atmospheric air for the lungs and the lungs for the air. But the depravity which rules the heart of man contests the right of God to rule this lower world, affects to dictate truth to itself, and disdains the holy truth of God, until at last the visions of the real become obscured in the visions of the ideal, and the book of inspiration comes to be of less importance, and, finally, less certain than the records of uninspired pens and the blasphemous ravings of arrant hypocrites and contemptible fools. Unbelief is at once the soul's enemy and its crime, and long is the conflict which it wages with Jesus Christ and with the holy and lofty claims of truth and immortality.

3. *We must now speak of the spirit's battle with outward foes.*

Briefly let me suggest to you that there is a battle with intractable matter. It is not in the form nor in the place in which the soul desires it. It is wanted in the form of houses, and of bread, and of clothes. All the vast business arrangements of the world are so many battles with gross matter; the attempts of the soul to mould it so that it may serve its purposes. All the commerce of the world is a continuous battle with matter; an attempt to conquer its inertia, to take it where it can serve the convenience of man and the ends of a higher civilization; agriculture and manufacture, railroads, navigation, and mail routes, are all spirit-battles with stubborn matter.

I only glance at this, but must dwell a little upon the soul's battle with other minds.

Suppose the contest to be for reputation. Now there is a battle with unfair, uncandid rivalry, with slander and injustice, there is competition with those various methods in which vicious minds aspire to raise themselves up by dragging others down.

If it be a battle for place, then there is the dishonesty of the reckless politician and the want of just discrimination upon the part of constituencies; there is the power of bribery which undermines the ballot-box, the palladium of liberty, or perverts justice in her sacred halls. How many minds of aspiring virtue and noble ambition, born to shine with brilliancy in the galaxy of intellect and fame, cruelly defeated and crushed, have been hurled from their position by the hand of guilty treachery, or brutal violence.

The battle for success is not unfrequently with poverty and obscurity of birth. Minds springing up from the lower stratum of society, and rising in the majesty

of conscious power to grapple with formidable foes, find obscurity of origin, and stern poverty and cruel prejudice, pressing hard upon them at every step. But here is the field of noble daring and of chivalrous Christian heroism. Here struggling, generous, enduring mind becomes to me the sublimest spectacle on earth.

A young man, with no ancestral renown, or emblazoned heraldry, to bribe the criticism of a censorious world, or win the smiles of soulless villains, with no cringing cowardice or fear, shrinking from the exactions of patrons or tyrants, firm in conscious rectitude, and roused by a sense of cruel injustice, reposing with profound humility and noble dignity upon the might of Jehovah, moving calmly out into the battle of life, is an object of admiring interest to men and angels and God. You will say, and say truly, that there is sublimity in the towering mountain, in the rushing cataract, in the rolling thunder and the rumbling earthquake. But I point you to the young man, rising up from obscurity with a cool, clear intellect, with a brave heart, with steady nerves and a clear eye, a victor over his own passions, allying himself with the power of the Almighty, controlling the elements, grappling with the foes of God and man, dashing to the ground the noisy pretenders that obstruct the way to fame, gracefully lifting up, and sustaining the feeble and deserving, formidable to vice in high places, nobly achieving the purposes of man's probation; I point you to this as an instance of the sublime, surpassing all others.

But I must call your attention to the battle of the spirit with satanic agencies. There is a Master of sin and sinners, under whose influence depravity becomes more deeply depraved, and hell itself becomes more intensely hell. That satanic power is everywhere active, injecting evil thoughts into the minds of men,

and stirring up vile passions, striving with the utmost malignity to break down all virtue, to frustrate the plans of God, to destroy whatever is fair and lovely in the condition and prospects of the race. The spirit's battle with this arch-fiend and his subordinates, is truly a life battle, and woe to the man who attempts it in his own strength.

Finally, to understand this contest, it must be viewed upon an extended scale. You must see it as it passes beyond the sphere of individual life, and involves the grand, benevolent purposes of God to man.

And now, if you look out upon the world, you shall see a battle going on this hour between God and all good men and angels, on the one hand, seeking to rescue the victims of vice and of folly, to give position and power among men to all good principles and agencies; and all demons and bad men on the other; seeking, by all means possible, to increase the malignity of sin and to drag away immortal souls to the bottomless pit. Here are the parties and the strife. The whole earth is a battle-field. Every pulpit, every Christian altar, every prayer-meeting, every tract, and Sunday-school, and missionary society becomes a battle-scene. See how the contest rises in sublimity and power as the grand forces of three worlds are brought into collision, where the efforts of ages are concentrated to rescue and save what is noble and immortal in man. This is a contest fraught with interests which no human eye can see, and no finite powers comprehend.

And you are a party in this magnificent strife. We entreat you, do not dishonor your immortal powers, and yield the victory to your guilty foes. Under God, through the grace of the Redeemer, your life, your happiness, your all, for time and eternity, depend upon your personal bearing in the conflict.

II.—Let us consider the victory and the awards.

1. *They have their Conditions.*

It is likely that, in any contest, advantage will appear on the one side or the other. It is interesting to inquire, in behalf of the high contending parties, what are the terms of the fight, what are the conditions upon which the victory will depend?

First, we remark, that the victory in this contest depends upon the *right.* There is a difference between the spiritual contests to which we now refer, and the physical battles of the world. It must be admitted that these sometimes depend upon might rather than right; upon physical power, upon skill in generalship, upon the success of tactics, upon the proportion of numbers, and upon numerous circumstances which have nothing to do with the right. I said *sometimes*, because I wish to admit it with the qualification that even in these collisions there can be no estimate of probabilities as to the final conquest without regard to Providence, without the recognition of the Divine interference. I observe that in comprehensive views, the evidences of a God in history are marked and decisive, and if it be allowed that the contest between contending armies sometimes turns upon the physical power, or energy, or tactics of the contending parties, irrespective of the right, it must yet be allowed upon a general scale, in the perpetual revolutions of human affairs going onward under the supervision of a merciful Providence, there is a guardianship over the right, there is a vindication of justice, there is an exhibition of the interference of God in the management of human affairs, which will go far to sustain the general truth—that the right, upon the whole, is sure to triumph. But whatever may be the facts of physical collisions, the effects or results in the battles of nations, there can be no question with regard to the great

moral and spiritual conflicts between the powers of darkness and light. He who contends for the right is victor if he fall. If his body perish, his soul is immortal; if his life is sacrificed, his principles endure; if he passes out of sight, the achievements of his mind and his efforts come out before the eyes of men, and he himself is the responsible agent in history, and the vindicated party upon the principles of unalterable rectitude.

Therefore, whoever contends against the appetites of the body in their morbid action; against the ignorance, and especially the spiritual ignorance, of the soul; against the natural dullness of the soul; against the depravity of the soul; he who fights "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," arrays himself upon the side of God, and God is always right; arrays himself upon the side of revelation, and revelation is always right; arrays himself upon the side of the atonement, and of the intercessions of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is always right; arrays himself with good men, with holy angels, with the purest principles that ever entered the intelligence or grappled with the depravity of man, with the most exalted powers that ever sought to elevate man, and holiness and justice are always right. How can he fail to be a victor whose principles and only essential interests are not involved in the catastrophe of the battle, and who, from the very necessities of his being, survives the death of the body, the decomposition of physical organisms, and the power of his mortal and immortal foes, and despite them all rises in the true sphere of a spiritual existence with reinvigorated life, prepared to glorify God forever?

Again, I claim that the conquests of this battle will have something to do with mental characteristics. It is not to be overlooked in estimating the various conflicts

to which we have referred, that some minds are constitutionally better adapted to their severe trials than others, and that inequalities of power will produce a corresponding diversity of results in the characteristics of the conquests, and a corresponding gradation in the awards. They who fight manfully under severe trials are unquestionably strengthened in virtue, and are destined to high consideration in the awards that are to be granted to the victors in this life-battle.

In the contest with astute, scheming foes, true instinct to detect the character of those foes, to anticipate the time of their attack, to judge well of their power, and to seize without effort the means of resistance, will modify the characteristics of the battle. If there be a gifted reason to estimate probabilities, a keen insight into character, a power to calculate the strength of moral forces as they come upon the arena of strife, and seize upon even adverse circumstances and convert them into means and resources of success, there will be, even under the same conditions of grace, a corresponding probability of a loftier triumph and a higher elevation of the victor. A cool judgment under critical conditions, power to conduct an argument, to a clear and safe conclusion, in the midst of excitement and peril, ability to mould men and circumstances, to grapple with the perverse elements of human character, rise superior to them, and press them into the service of truth and virtue, must enter into the conditions of the contest, and have much to do in determining both the victory and the awards.

But it should be particularly noted in the next place, that this is more than anything else a faith-battle. My text says, "Fight the good fight of faith." Faith is the grand controlling power upon which all other conditions of success depend. "This is the victory that overcometh

the world, even our faith;" and when you consider the relations of faith to the parties concerned in this contest you will see how it is, that it should be a governing and decisive element, that it should lead inevitably to results of commanding importance.

You will see that faith implies an alliance of the contending power with the infinite strength of the Almighty. I can permit you to assume for the moment, that this is a question of relative physical or metaphysical force, and you at once perceive that he who casts himself upon the arm of God wields a power to which there can be no limits. He may implicitly rely upon this power to guard him in the right. The Almighty mind will energize him in the contest, and the indestructible agencies which God has furnished, will, through faith, be available in every emergency. Faith takes the man out of himself, renounces forever the idea of self-support in the contests which are raging, and rolls the burden of the battle upon God.

This is most reasonable, for the earnest Christian is fearfully engaged with the enemies of God: but he is God's own child; and it is right that the helpless child should apply to the father for protection. He is out upon God's mission; the contest is expressly for carrying out the plans and purposes of God; it is therefore but reasonable that the missionary should rely upon the support of the power that sends him. He fights for principles that are dear to God; and it is the highest propriety that he should depend upon the protecting hand of the Being from whom these principles arise, and whose they are. He fights to rescue his brethren from peril, those who are God's own children, and who are allied to him by the tenderest relations; and he fights on the side of God, and against those who oppress the weak, the poor, and the helpless; and the great

Jehovah is the sworn friend of the weak, the poor, and the helpless. Whatever, therefore, may be the perils of the conflict, you will perceive that those who "fight the good fight of faith" are under the protection of God, who has munificently pledged divine power to defend the right, and secure its final triumph.

I beg you to consider, however, that this is not merely a question of relative personal prowess, but rather of available spiritual power under evangelical laws; and living faith, firm trust in God, is the grand condition upon which divine agency can coöperate with the individual in this contest, so as to secure inevitable success. He who goes into the battle by God's own order is required so to believe as to avail himself of God's own strength. No marvel, therefore, that "signs and wonders follow them that believe." Faith in Christ secures the justification of the sinner, the regeneration and sanctification of the soul, the highest endeavors of human energy divinely assisted, for the correction of private and social wrongs and the elevation of the race; the essential vigor and immortality of the inner life, and the final salvation of the soul; and this is what we mean by *victory*.

If you glance at the issues which are made in this life-battle, you will see how faith is the grand element of power. Suppose the contest is with the senses of the body, faith then takes up the inquiry where sight leaves it, and leads the spirit on to worlds unknown to sense, and uncovers the realities of eternity.

Suppose the contest to be with the animal appetites of the body, faith, as you see, calls in most potent spiritual agencies to the aid of the spiritual man—suppresses and conquers the rebellion of the flesh. It calls up the higher nature of man, and develops the pure and practical reason. Faith is on the side of conscience, and it

consequently secures the triumph of the moral over the animal constitution of man. It exalts him in the scale of being to his intended sphere of dignity and power.

If you refer to the contest with the fixed local condition of the body, you see how faith takes the spirit from its prison and bears it upward to the abode of the great God, and reveals the glory ineffable where saints and angels and the world's Redeemer meet.

> "Faith lends its realizing light,
> The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
> The invisible appears in sight,
> And God is seen by mortal eye."

Suppose, again, the contest to be with the spirit itself, see how faith comes to the help of the man who grapples with his own ignorance. Faith in God is the life of the scholar, the power by which he surmounts difficulties otherwise insuperable. Faith reveals the strength of his own assisted powers; gives him clearness of vision, precision of thought, and force of will; for the light of God shines into the soul, and the life of God energizes the powers of the believing man.

In the study of divine things, faith alone reveals the soul of eternal truth, and strengthens the mind to grasp and appropriate it. Evangelical faith recognizes the relations of the soul to Jesus Christ, and draws from the atonement the elements of a new and vigorous life. It strengthens every power of the intellect and heart, and secures splendid victory when otherwise there would be disgraceful defeat. It brings the Holy Ghost into the soul of the inquirer, and uncovers the sources of spiritual knowledge, as they are "hid in God," in the vast creation, and in the laws of Providence.

Faith is the grand power in the spiritual battle. It grapples with the mere animal and the infidel in man. It conquers the depravity of his heart, when that

power is more than a match for his highest intelligence and firmest resolutions. It brings the heart into contact with the atonement, and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin."

If you pass to the sphere of the spirit's battle with outward foes, you will see that here also it conquers only by faith. The men who perform prodigies of valor are the men who believe they can do it. The great Napoleon, as he went from field to field, from carnage to carnage, through his campaigns in Italy and on the Rhine, and through the principal kingdoms of Europe, dethroning and enthroning monarchs at his pleasure, believed himself and his legions invincible. And yet this strong belief only illustrates the power of true faith which sustains the heart and nerves the arm of the spiritual warrior. Such a man, however obscure in his origin or weak in himself, is surely invincible. God will defend his head and shield his heart in the day of battle, against the assaults of the strongest foe, and bear him in triumph from the field of the slain, a victor over the world, the flesh, and the devil. But he who undertakes the battles of life with no faith, leaning only upon finite power, is already a conquered man.

Mark, therefore, that this "good fight" is, in every condition of success, a "fight of faith." This one condition enters into, modifies, and controls all others.

2. *The victory and awards have their time.*

They are not in all cases immediately declared. God sees proper to defer them, for reasons that are well understood by himself. The great warrior must become inured to the difficulties of the contest. He must be educated for great achievements by patient, enduring efforts, amid stern conflicts and deep distress. He may be destined to long years of struggling poverty and personal degradation. He may spend weary days and

nights in contest with an enfeebled body and a fallen soul, with unyielding matter and malevolent spirits, and, to the outward eye he may be all this time only an object of pity, when in reality he is one of God's heroes. There is scarcely a man of genius and of might in the history of the race, who has not, at one time or another, seen pointed at him the finger of scorn, and felt the annoyance of petty criticisms from inflated, contemptible, little minds, while in his far-seeing benevolence and profound humility he was striving to bow himself low enough to get his trusty shoulder under the burdens of the world's enormous woes! Surely it is safe to work and wait. The triumph of faith, though long deferred, is yet inevitable, for it depends upon the changeless laws of the moral universe—upon the immutable decrees of the infinite God.

It will sometimes occur that the victory and the awards will be simultaneous. Indeed there is a high sense in which resistance to evil and efforts for the right are their own reward. The soul, even in the midst of its darkest trials, feels a relief and a happiness arising from the consciousness of moral integrity and the fact of suffering in a righteous cause, which no cowardly slave of passion or of popular prejudice could understand, if it were described to him, or even approach without agony.

Progressive conquests and rewards are the experience of every Christian soldier. He finds them in the visible retreat of his vanquished foes, in the increasing clearness of his convictions, and power of his faith, in the ease with which he now triumphs where once he was nearly slain, and in the accumulating evidences of the presence and approbation of his Master. In addition to all this, he knows that however much he may suffer, he is destined finally to triumph. Fall when he may, the

crown is his, and in the thickest of the fight, faith beholds that glittering crown in the hands of the Judge, urging him to deeds of valor in the field of strife, of suffering, and of blood.

The death of the body must precede the final award. The soul must drop this cumbrous clay before it can soar to its home, in

"The palace of angels and God."

It does not, cannot realize its destiny here, where weariness and slumbers, pains and conflicts absorb so much of his time, and dull matter so restricts the sphere of its observations and efforts. It is evident that God intends its release. Disease and various known and unknown mysterious agencies attack the clay tenement from without, and the struggling mind presses it hard from within. It will soon fall, and the seraphic soul, with a shout of triumph, will fly to the bosom of God.

3. *The Victory and Awards have their Value.*

But who can estimate it? Determine the value of full and final deliverance from the crimes, the corruptions, and consequences of sin; of confirmation in virtue and piety; of deep communion with God and a life of usefulness, to which an angel might aspire; of a holy triumph in death; of a home with God in paradise; of a glorious resurrection when the world is on fire; of the approbation of the Judge in the last great day, of the escape of a sinner from the flames of hell; of eternal happiness where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are forever at rest;" of the eternal progression of the soul in holy love and moral power; where God smiles, where angels sing, and the ransomed of the Lord shout their triumphs forever;—fully estimate all this, and you will know the value of the victory and

the awards offered to the Christian warrior who acquits himself manfully in the life-battle of probation.

Where are you in this contest? Are you on the side of right? Do you obey the apostolic charge, "fight the good fight of faith?" Are you to be finally crowned as a moral hero in the world's great battle?

Ah! in the midst of the brave old veterans of the cross, my eye rests upon multitudes who have just entered the army of the Lord—I hear them exulting that they are on the Lord's side; that they fight in the ranks of the redeemed in this contest; that the arm of divine power is around them, and the Almighty will shield them in the day of battle. Welcome, young soldiers of the cross! Obey your great commander, and no weapon formed against you shall prevail. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God; that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with a preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." These instructions are perfect. Obey them, and you are safe; obey them, and you may await with composure and with holy triumph the conflagra-

tions of the last great day, and the moment of union with your glorified body, when the assembled universe shall see you crowned.

"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Amen.

XXV.

NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

BY WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.

Pastor of the Madison Square Presbyterian Church.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This *is* the first commandment.

And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.—MARK, xii. 28–34.

THE *manner* in which the most weighty truths were taught by the Son of God deserves our special regard. Instead of bare and arid propositions, we have, very frequently, living forms, representative examples. Individuals, such as Nicodemus; the rich young ruler, a paragon of morality; the scowling scribe; Mary Magdalene, who was a penitent sinner; the thoughtful doctor of the law, and many others, representing each a class of the human species, are brought into the pre-

sence of our Lord, and the conversation which follows stands for all time, as a precedent and a law. In the New Testament, accordingly, we have not only a series of precepts, but a moving panorama of living characters, who come in contact with Jesus Christ, propose their questions, receive their answers, and pass along, giving place to others; but their questions and answers do not pass away with them, but remain forever, the record of spiritual truths in a living form.

The incident now before us will illustrate my meaning. Here was a man who was pronounced by our Lord to be "*not far* from the kingdom of God." If, now, we shall be able to understand the very posture of the mind here introduced and described, we shall very readily solve the question—whether we ourselves are near to or remote from the kingdom of heaven.

The individual here referred to was a scribe, an ecclesiastical lawyer, learned in all questions pertaining to the religion of his country. As it appears from the narrative itself (and the method of procuring the true stereoscopic impression of the whole scene is to collate the language of the several evangelists who have recorded it), he was a listener to what had occurred in Christ's conversation with other parties. The Herodians, designing to entrap him, had just asked him a question concerning the payment of tribute to the Roman government. Immediately after this, the Sadducees proposed to him another question concerning the resurrection. Both parties received an answer, but an answer so smooth, so adroit, so discreet, that they were transfixed on their own dilemmas. They were baffled and silenced, so that they did not dare to ask him any more questions. The scribe, who next appears in view, a spectator of the scene, seems to have been struck with the peculiarly neat,

wise and unanswerable language of our Lord. It evinced an accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. Wishing to ascertain more of this extraordinary stranger, and to improve the opportunity for solving certain matters which had long been upon his own mind, he now steps forward, and proposes a question to our Lord, for himself. His purpose in so doing, we must believe, was honest, his disposition was good. Matthew, indeed, says, that the lawyer asked the question "*tempting* him." But a very slight acquaintance with the language of the New Testament, satisfies one that the word thus rendered is used in a good sense as well as a bad. If in some instances it obviously imports a malignant design, such as solicitation to evil, or ensnaring one in mischief, in others, it is used, just as obviously, in the general sense of proving one for the purpose of ascertaining his opinions and character. Beyond all question, this was the intention of the individual now before us. There was no malign purpose in his heart, for, had there been, our Lord never would have said that he was near to the kingdom of God. Convinced that the man who, in his hearing, had just before refuted the Herodians and the Sadducees so cleverly, must have still farther knowledge of the Scriptures, and wishing himself to obtain information pertinent to his own profession, he also asked a question which was intended to develop the character of the man in whose presence he stood. The question proposed was this: "Master, which is the first commandment of all?" To redeem this inquiry from the appearance of frivolity, it should be borne in mind that this was a point long mooted by the Jewish teachers, whether the law of sacrifice, or the law of circumcision, or the law of the Sabbath, or the law of the phylacteries, should have the precedence. Our Lord answered the question thus proposed, by reciting

sentences which were written in the phylacteries themselves; the compendium of the *moral* law. Taking no notice whatever of those disputed questions concerning the *ceremonial* law, he rehearsed at once the substance of the divine statute which epitomizes all morals: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment." And the scribe exclaimed: "Master, thou hast answered *well*."

Our English word *well* does not exhaust the meaning of the Greek καλως —beautifully—excellently—conveying the high satisfaction which was felt with that reply. It was an answer which corresponded to his own judgment. What are forms and ritualisms—burnt-offerings and sacrifices, in comparison with the temper of the heart, the right quality of the affections! When our Lord perceived the heartiness and discretion with which the scribe responded to his own saying, he said unto him, "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*" He affirmed not that this man was *in* the kingdom, but that he was *near* to it; far nearer than if his manner, his disposition, his opinions had been other than they were. Few words need be expended in proving that the expression, "kingdom of God," signifies, in this connection, that state of blessed security which is revealed and proffered to us in the gospel. It indicates that condition of things which is by Jesus Christ insuring man's highest welfare for this life, and for the life which is to come. Whether the person here conversing with Christ actually entered within the kingdom, receiving the gospel, and the salvation of his soul, we are not informed. No further mention is made of his case; he is not introduced again in the sacred annals; the curtain drops just at this time and place; so that we cannot even conjecture whether, improving his advantages, he pressed on yet

farther, even within the precincts of safety, or, withdrawing his foot, retreated to a greater distance from the kingdom of God. The point of greatest interest to us is that which is disclosed in this one interview and conversation. If this individual evinced a condition of character which brought him into a critical nearness to the kingdom of Heaven, it is of great concern to each and all of us to know what that condition was, that we may measure our own relations to the redemption of the Son of God.

Our wisdom, therefore, is to ascertain, if it be possible, what there was peculiar to the individual thus described, which drew forth this judgment from our Lord, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God?" The only source of knowledge which is open to us, in reference to this inquiry, is the narrative itself.

The first thing, of a hopeful character, in the state of this individual, was that he was *disposed to press an honest and earnest inquiry after truth.*

We are constrained to believe that this was the case, from all the attendant circumstances. He was not a skeptic; he was not stupidly indifferent; he was not a crafty opponent; but he was disposed to inquire after the truth. This was decidedly auspicious and hopeful. The first thing which the truth of God demands is a mind open and attentive to receive it. The greatest censure which Scripture and observation compel us to pass upon multitudes of men is, that though the light shines they will not receive it. The doors and the windows are barred closely against it. The mind has no interest in the truth; profoundly insensible to its existence. A disposition to ask for the truth, to inquire for instruction, is the first sign of spiritual vitality. Inasmuch as the truth of God is nigh to us, flowing around us like the air, shining about us like the sun, the opening of the

mind to acquire it advances one immediately into the most auspicious proximity to its blessings.

The thoughtful teacher of the law was favored with the opportunity of a personal conversation with Christ. That is denied to us; but we possess what is better and greater. The kingdom of God has had a fuller disclosure since that day when the Son of Man held these memorable conversations in Jerusalem. The redemption which is by Jesus Christ is amply revealed; and that revelation is given to us in a written form. Remote from all the benefits of the gospel are all they who feel not interest enough therein to consult the pages of inspiration with a candid and earnest spirit. Their faces are actually averted from the light; their backs are turned upon the kingdom of God.

The first step—and that step advances one farther than may be supposed—is when he begins with personal interest to ask for the way of truth. That way is so plain and infallible that to inquire for it is to find it. Show me the man who, roused out of apathy, is inquisitive after the way of the Lord; who is earnest for the solution of those questions which have agitated his soul; who daily seeks for light and truth out of the oracles of God, even as he would have hung upon the lips of Christ in the days of his flesh; who is alert to improve every opportunity and help within his reach for acquiring that knowledge which is eternal life; and I will show you now the very man who is not far from the kingdom of God. The only thing which separates one from the abundant blessings which are in Christ is that opaque, inert condition of mind and heart which is likened unto death. To give heed, to inquire, to be candid, honest, earnest in seeking, at the words of Christ, what is needful for us to know, is to begin to live. Deepen this spirit of earnest inquisitiveness, and you bring one nearer and nearer to

the kingdom of God. Eyes that are shut cannot see the light. Let the senses be opened, and we may hope for the spiritual discernment which brings salvation.

Indispensable as is this earnest action of the mind, it is only initiatory. That which shows a more decided advance towards the kingdom of God, is a correct judgment as to the import of *the divine law*. The gospel of Jesus Christ is designed to be remedial of all those defects which are under the law. The consciousness of those defects must spring from a knowledge of the law itself. That which was the most hopeful of all things in the condition of this scribe was, that he had a true discernment of the spiritual nature of the divine commandment. In his judgment, holocausts, oblations, forms, rites, were of no account compared with that supreme love, which is the one essential law of our being. He who has reached this conviction will be likely to reach the conviction also that by that law of judgment he is impeached of a vast deficiency; and for this there is no remedy but in the grace of the Son of God. The law is the schoolmaster who leads us to Christ. Not far from the kingdom of heaven is he who beholds himself in the perfect law of his Maker, while the gospel will be an enigma and a stumbling-block to all such as discern not the spirituality of the divine statute.

To illustrate the many mistakes of men in reference to this vital subject, the New Testament presents us with several tableaux of living personages. One resembles, as to the outward appearance, the scribe introduced into this narrative. He was a magistrate, in the prime of life, of great wealth, and altogether, as to position and character, the elite of the land. He, too, displayed an unusual earnestness in his interview with our Lord. Seeing him approach, he ran, fell on his knees before Him, saying, "Master, good Master, what good thing

shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" However mistaken and impertinent the answers which we may give to such a question, our Lord never misjudged the character of individuals. The question proposed by this ornate moralist gives us the first glimpse of his character. "What *good thing* shall *I do* that I may inherit eternal life?" "If you are resolute in your determination," says Christ, "at *legal perfection*, the category of duty is briefly summed: Keep the commandments." "What commandments?" was the quick and eager inquiry. "Those, of course, which compose the moral law. Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; honor thy father and thy mother; all of which may be summed up in the one comprehensive requirement—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." With the utmost promptness and decision the young man replied: "Why, all these I have kept from my childhood. *What lack I yet?*"

Our Lord looked at him steadfastly; his calm eye, reading that soul through and through; when, breaking the silence of that prolonged gaze he said: "One thing thou lackest—if *thou wilt be perfect*—if thou wilt establish thy claim to a legal obedience which hath no flaw—go sell all thy possessions, give to the poor, and come take up thy cross and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." No one who is not disposed to cavil at the letter can misunderstand the meaning of this direction. He would only display his own petulancy and folly who should complain that this was an unreasonable demand made by Christ of all his disciples, and that this, indeed, was a hard saying, that every man must part with all his worldly estate before he can prove himself entitled to the kingdom of heaven. The passage contains no such sentiment, and the gospel presents no such condition. Here was a man who, by his

own words, declared a wish, and expectation to inherit eternal life on the *ground of perfect obedience.* Upon that ground, the ground which he had chosen, our Lord meets him, and for the purpose of convincing him that his legal obedience was fatally defective, he proposes a test to prove it. You will observe that in the commandments specified in the first instance, Christ referred only to those which belonged to the second table; of course the same which are comprised in every code of decent morality. Asserting his conformity to these, the ruler inquired with somewhat of pertness—"What lack I yet?" "*One thing,*" says Christ, "*and that* THE WHOLE." To prove to this man's own conscience that he was altogether defective in that supreme love for his Maker, which is the essence of the whole divine legislation—he presented to him a simple test, which was explosive of his hopes. The truth was, that beneath all that fair and fascinating exterior there was a heart of idolatry. This man loved his money more than he loved his God. The finger of the physician was laid upon the very tenderness and soreness of the disease. He had asked—what *he did lack?*—and the answer came, with such a look and emphasis as convinced him that he lacked everything. The bolt hit the conscience in the core. He went away grieved. Trusting in his own obedience, he had asked how to inherit eternal life, and he had received a response which proved that no obedience of his had been commensurate with the holy law of God, which requires a love which is cordial, a love which is universal, a love which is supreme. The probe did its office; and this very man, who a few minutes before embraced the knees of Christ with fervid emotion, now turned away from him with sadness, because the words which He had uttered proved to his own consciousness that he loved his riches more than he loved his God—more than he loved his fellow-man

It is *not* said of this man that he was near the kingdom of God. Whether he ever abandoned his ideas of legal perfection, and accepted the grace of his Redeemer we know not; but this we know, that an honest admission of what the divine law is, and what it requires, is a prerequisite to salvation through the Son of God.

As if to make this one point clear beyond all doubt, a third person is introduced on a third occasion, and he also was a lawyer of the church. The cast of his mind differed from those which we have considered already. He, too, inquired, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Christ answered him: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" And he answering said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." And He said unto him: "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." But this inquirer, addicted to a literal and superficial construction, was willing to *justify* himself, and asked, "Who is my neighbor? Then followed the parable of the good Samaritan—the full meaning of which is not understood, except we bear in mind the man and the circumstances which called it forth. It may seem to us like a beautiful painting, but it was like one of those pictures in the Interpreter's House, which gleamed terror on the soul of the Pilgrim, making him to tremble like an aspen leaf. Both of these incidents had a common design—to convince the men here described that their obedience to the law of God was altogether defective—the one having no love for his Maker, the other no love of the right quality for his fellow-man.

These interpretations of law are interpretations of ourselves; and no man is near to the kingdom of God—as that expression is used by Jesus Christ—salvation

through redeeming grace, without merit of our own—whose self-complacency has never been dissipated by a right discernment of the law. The law never can save us, and he is the nearest to the forgiveness of the gospel, who, with a contrite heart, discerns most clearly, and feels most profoundly, that perfection of the divine statute, which impeaches and condemns us. The publican, standing afar off from the throng of worshippers, was already within the kingdom of God, while the conceited Pharisee, pressing up to the chief places of the temple-courts, and foremost in his religious histrionism, was far removed from the grace of the Redeemer.

Our discourse, however, intends something more than the analysis of an historic incident. From the instance which is here recorded, I turn to that which occurs in these living hearts before me. Would you compute aright your own relations to the kingdom of God, measuring your own proximity to those incomparable benefits in the gift of the Redeemer, answer to yourself, whether there has been any change as to the interest you feel for the wise provision of your immortal spirit. The time was, it may be, when you were conscious of a most profound indifference to the love which passeth knowledge, and to the wrath to come. Is it so—that by influences, which you can neither control nor describe, you have come to feel a want that has never been met, and to inquire for a good which never yet has been found? Does it seem as if a veil had been withdrawn from before your mind, so that in hours of deep and earnest thinking, objects which you never believed before, seem to start out from the shadows, as if just created?

Have you begun to knock at those gates of wisdom, where you never knocked before? Have you begun to pray for divine help in the solution of those spiritual

mysteries which agitate you? Have you felt that your pride was melting down into a meek and gentle desire to know the way of the Lord more perfectly? Are you a candid, diligent reader of the Scriptures, and do you ask that your soul may be illuminated, quickened, and inclined aright?

Have you been conscious of some new discernment of the divine law, admiring it as the expression, not of cruel severity, but of God's infinite benignity; clear as crystal, and glorious as this Sabbath firmament? and does there gleam across your mind, at times the thought of what you are, when judged by that perfect commandment? Times in which the truth will grapple with you, as a mighty wrestler, in whose grasp your strength withers, that, if you love anything in the universe more than your Maker, then, indeed, you are an *idolator*—whether that object of preference be hideous as a hydra, or fascinating as a syren? Are you ever startled by the thought of what the issue must be, if your self-assertion should never bow itself in happy submission to God, and your soul, with such a purpose should be set free, amid the powers of a changeless eternity? Does the conviction, sometimes clear and strong, amid all your gains and profits, plough through your deepest consciousness, that you need out of yourself, just that which the Christ of God offers to give you—pardon, hope, peace, suretyship, salvation?

My dear friend, amid all these agitations, self-judgments, depressions, inquiries, gropings, if you did but know it, you are not far from the kingdom of God. You may be ready to judge yourself at a hopeless distance; but your condition is a thousand fold more hopeful than it was before you awoke to this conscious sensibility. You feel that you are sick—and lo! the physician is at your bed side; the wound pains you;

the balsam is nigh at hand. You have discovered that you are in want, and hard by is all the fullness of God.

It is a great thing to be *near* the kingdom of God, because it is such a great thing actually to be within it. All that is not within is without. It is not enough to be near salvation—*we must be saved.* I need not inform an intelligent hearer, that the condition I have described is peculiarly *critical.* In that immediate vicinity to the help which he needs, he stands balancing himself on the question, whether he will advance or retreat, whether he will press on and cross the threshold, or turn back, and prove himself not fit for the kingdom of God.

To remember that once we were near the salvation of Christ; so near that our right hand might have touched and taken it; and, after all, that hand was withheld, this is a memory which will enhance remorse forever. God forbid that one of our number should at last come short of the proffered rest: but should one from among us fail of the grace of God, the recollection of his former nearness to it will "bite like a serpent and sting like an adder." We can all of us recall seasons in our lives when, in a special sense, we were near to the salvation of God; affliction had mellowed us—truth had stolen into our hearts—we were inclined to an unusual sobriety—parental faithfulness melted us; but let us never forget, that to be almost persuaded to be a Christian is not the same as being a Christian; to walk around the city of God is not the same as to enter it: to discern our need, great as that is, is not precisely the same thing as to receive what that need requires. Let our subject, therefore, plead with all to press into the kingdom of God. Now, when you are so near to its security—now, when its gates stand open wide—now, when you can look in upon the brightness of the celestial metropolis, and hear the

gladness of its music—now, when invitations come forth from the Spirit and the Bride to take of the waters of life freely—now, when opportunities are so favorable, when the breath of prayer seems to waft you upwards—now, while God waits to be gracious—now, while He who calls himself your Redeemer, Saviour, Friend, Physician, Helper, is so nigh, avail yourself of his offices, and live forever!

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